

Dystopia and Doppelgangers: the Gothic Indictment

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by

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January, 1997

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature.



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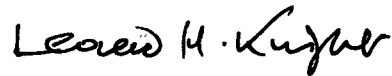
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Abstract

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Ph. D. in English Literature

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January, 1997

The Gothic genre has been the victim of much misinterpretation: when not savaged for its grotesqueness, it has been praised only for its wilder flights of fancy. However, it was as much a product of the Augustan "Age of Progress" as its decorous counterpart, Sentimentalism. There are specific socio-historical reasons behind its emergence, and a surprising philosophical and theological depth to its indictment of the shortcomings of its age: even at its most fantastic, it shows the political, economic, religious, ethical and psychological dilemmas of eighteenth and nineteenth century British society and its individuals. In its ambiguous attitude towards the Middle Ages and Catholicism, its ludic use of archaic literary motifs, and its juxtaposition of supposedly irrational codes of belief with more modern positivistic post-Enlightenment doctrines, it holds nothing sacred: Gothic is as valuable a form of dystopian satire as it is a psychologically effective form of fantasy. This dissertation has grown out of an analysis of five Gothic novels: Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. They best represent the way that Gothic strategies provide a sardonic reflection of bourgeois society and its unacknowledged inheritance; they best convey the tensions (some topical, some universal) which for the most part Gothic deliberately leaves unresolved.

Özet

Distopya ve Yansımaları: Gotik Eleştiri

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Gotik roman tarzı hep yanlış yorumların kurbanı olmuştur: tuhaflıkları için katledilmediği zamanlarda sırf dehşetli tahayüllerinden ötürü göklere çıkarılmıştır. Aslında Gotik "Augustan Çağı", ya da "İlerleme Çağı" diye adlandırılan, düzene ve estetiğe önem veren "rafine" toplum kültürünün bir yan ürünü ve onun eleştirisidir. Ortaya çıkışının ardında somut bazı sosyal ve tarihi sebepler mevcuttur. Gotik roman tarihi ve toplumsal hataları eleştirirken ilginç bir biçimde felsefi ve dini bir derinliği de içinde barındırır: en gerçek üstü anlatımlarında bile 18 ve 19 yy. Britanyasının ve onun bireylerinin politik, ekonomik, dini, ahlaksal ve psikolojik çelişkilerine yer verir. Ortaçağ'a ve Katolik inancına karşı olan dengesiz tutumuyla, geleneksel edebiyat motiflerini kullanımındaki fütursuzluğuyla ve inanç sistemleriyle Aydınlanma'nın akılcı doktrinlerini bir arada ele almasıyla Gotik, tüm rasyonel ve kutsal öğeleri hiçe sayar. Sonuçta Gotik, hem distopya türü bir hiciv, hem de psikolojik olarak etkili bir "fantezi roman" tarzıdır. Bu tez beş Gotik roman incelemesinden oluşmaktadır: Horace Walpole'un *The Castle of Otranto*'su, Ann Radcliffe'in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*'su, Matthew Lewis'in *The Monk*'u, Charles Maturin'in *Melmoth the Wanderer*'i ve Mary Shelley'nin *Frankenstein*'i. Bu eserlerde kullanılan Gotik motifler burjuva toplumunun geçmişle olan bağının kopukluğunu alaycı bir biçimde yansıtmakta; toplumsal çelişkileri (bazısı güncel, bazısı evrensel) en çarpıcı biçimde ortaya koymakta ve bu sorunları da kasten çözümsüz bırakmaktadır.

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INTRODUCTION

Barbarism at the Gate: the Nightmares of Reason

Before *The Castle of Otranto*, the term "Gothic" referred either to the Goths, the barbarian Germanic tribes of the fifth century who "played so somewhat unfairly reviled a part in the collapse of the Roman Empire"¹ and later supplanted that empire, ushering in the Middle Ages in the process, or to an artistic and architectural style marked by the "pointed arch and vault, vertical effects (suggesting aspiration), stained windows (mystery), slender spires, flying buttresses, intricate traceries . . . and flexibility of spirit".² After Horace Walpole assimilated this term and its possible connotations into a literary context, however, the word came to categorise a body of fiction that was destined to excite the fears, and thereby paradoxically please the fancies, of an age. This ambiguous term seemed to sum up the more sinister, less civilised aspects of history and aesthetics, hidden and suppressed by the official culture of a Sentimental and materialist society.

Shortly after Walpole, however, this new style proved itself to be a new trend in literature, deviating completely from the standards of the age. It was not well received. Augustan critics condemned the genre.³ Modern critics have been more sympathetic, but still misunderstand it: they have hardly discerned the reasons behind the emergence and popularity of Gothic. More excusably, perhaps, they have also often shown themselves unable to perceive the nature of the delight in the "grotesque"-- but since they ignore the conditions which informed the aesthetic behind these novels, it is unsurprising that they find little to appreciate in the genre. If Gothic is prized at all, it is as a kind of idiolect or a

slight return of an anterior (and presumably superior, more authentic or more important) tradition.⁴ This goes some way towards explaining one of the most interesting aspects of Gothic: the way in which it pulled its readers back to appreciation of an earlier (and most "unenlightened") paradigm.⁵ However, it ignores the way in which the genre incorporates an acknowledgement, even in its violation of Neo-Classical standards, of the specific socio-historical, as well as literary, factors behind the birth of the Gothic, in an industrial age whose acolytes strenuously proclaimed their "Enlightenment" while surrounded by inequality and exploitation. Since nothing springs fully developed *ex nihilo*, analysis of the cultural process behind Gothic may prove revealing, and relevant to a fuller appreciation of not only the final product, but also the *rationale* behind the genre's creation. In this respect, the emergence and development of Gothic literature will be taken not merely as the epiphenomena of an "age of reason",⁶ but as the logical, if perverse, conclusion to a process of cultural self-definition riddled with inconsistencies, aporia and hypocrisies. Gothic is grounded in the conditions of a transitional period dominated by rationalist philosophy, industrialism, and their resultant socio-cultural and ethical impacts on individuals.

The emergence of Gothic literature coincides with the last decades of the positivist, optimistic literary and philosophical movement in Europe, the Enlightenment. The rise of the Gothic, with its stress on the irrational, the inexplicable, and the pessimistic, is a reaction against the Enlightenment philosophy which in England created the Augustan school and a form of writing which, its proponents claimed, resembled Newtonian laws and methods in stressing simplicity, clarity, and symmetry. The artificially created order of a

Leibnizian (and Spinozan)⁷ "Best of Possible Worlds" was the subject of as much criticism from the Gothic writers as it had been from Voltaire. Most European intellectuals had not estimated the adverse effects of discarding past knowledge and anterior traditions from the future of mankind. By abjuring (and thus erasing) the past, they left the present undefined. By stressing rationalism and utility, Enlightenment philosophy created materialism and paved the way for the Industrial Revolution. This changed the whole fabric of English society, but still left the majority of the population isolated and marginalised⁸, or forced into "deviance" by the rules of that society.⁹ All industrial tyranny in that post-Hobbesian age was "justified" by economics and ergonomics: mankind's position and function in the universe were being reassessed, but more cynically than logically. In a world at best Deist, and often Atheist, there was no moral obligation to follow the fiats of an omnipotent (but benevolent) creator. Ethical codes underwent a pernicious process of erosion. In art and literature and in society's view of itself, the same theme kept recurring: a world that had once known God naturally and instinctively had somehow lost touch with him. Even in religious circles, the question of how to regain God was being discussed. Derek Jarret remarks in *The Sleep of Reason* that "The book of Revelation had predicted long ago that mankind's drift into unbelief would result in seven vials of God's wrath being poured out upon the earth while the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse--Death, Famine, War and Pestilence--rode out to ravage mankind."¹⁰ God would return to the world not kindly, but as a destructive force. The French revolution had already marked the first vial of God, and Gothic literature elaborated this prevailing fear. The age's loss of faith (and

concomitant erosion of social and personal morality) finds expression in almost all Gothic works.

In *Otranto*, Walpole formulated a "Gothic machinery": he incorporated genres like romance, tragedy, legend, and fairy tale into a novel, provided his tale with a moral quite at odds with the positivistic spirit of his age, and harked back to an older, medieval, tradition of fatalism and numinous dread. Through such themes and motifs, the resultant novel reflected the socio-cultural discord and divisions of the Augustan age, and the secret, occult strands within it. This meant that his work could not but convey the deeper psychological malaise found within individuals. *Otranto* is disturbing enough for that reason, but to further reflect the widespread feeling of unease, Walpole thought it necessary to utilise purely atmospheric (and often clichéd) devices: the villainous but strangely charismatic central male figure, the threatened maiden, and the possibility of some kind of perverse sexuality, most often incest. Ann Radcliffe, first inheritor of the Gothic mantle, refined the cruder *stylistic* elements of Walpole through a successful management of suspense and further developed both characters and setting, which, indeed, are only dimly adumbrated in *Otranto*. In her hands the Gothic makes a slight return to order and rationality, as understood by the sentimental world. However, later, more discontented writers took only *stylistic* inspiration from Radcliffe, going on to further darken the turbulent confluence of philosophical and theological motifs. Matthew Lewis, C.R. Maturin, and Mary Shelley repeated the same themes--medievalism, Catholicism, necromancy and transgressive villainy--in their novels, but also fleshed out their works (almost literally!) with apparently more gratuitous violence and perversity. In Lewis the sacrosanct values of the age, are, through

its anachronistic (or dystopian) counterpart, violated (even raped, in the person of Antonia); in Maturin the innate evil in man is made overt through a Satanic figure, Melmoth; in Mary Shelley bourgeois society is disrupted by the Monster, a product of both science and a more Scholastic tradition--alchemy. All these writers dealt with the darker aspects of both man and society, speaking what polite society deemed to be unspeakable, and yet was eager to listen to. Hence, in the hands of these subsequent novelists Gothic completely left the mainstream of the sentimental (if *risque*) tradition developed by Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne. In Gothic both the villainous and virtuous characters, despite their anachronistic settings, are allegorical figures representing ethical dilemmas of the Augustan age. The villain of *Otranto*, Manfred, is described not merely as an impious proto-Machiavelli from the Middle Ages, but also as an eighteenth century bourgeois keen to rise in status. His situation suggests the way in which eighteenth and nineteenth century individuals found themselves spiritually (and sometimes literally) disinherited amid great changes and with no moral identity. After *Otranto*, other Gothic villains--Montoni in *Udolpho*, Ambrosio in *The Monk*, Melmoth in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, and Victor Frankenstein--are given the status of tragic heroes (or Byronic/Romantic "anti-heroes"). External forces (society and supra-natural powers) are arrayed against them, both punishing them for their violation of Providential (or religious) authority, and confirming them in further rebellion. The virtuous characters, emblems of sentimental society, like Theodore, Emily, Valancourt and Raymond, are given roles akin to romance heroes, yet they either remain passive, or achieve nothing--their chivalric dynamism notwithstanding. Naive and credulous, they show no trace of personality or resolution. This

Manichaeian division of character in Gothic represents (if rather crudely) the trauma of individuals in conflict with the new social system. Despite a mentality which still has roots in the heritage of pre-Reformation Europe, they must live in the present, materialistic world. Both vicious and virtuous characters' lives are rendered "grotesque" by the gothicists, who, while ridiculing the sentimental characters for their ignorance and artificial morality, condemn the villains for their uncouth ambition and perversity. Indeed, society itself is indicted for producing these two completely different, and in their own ways, "queer" types.

One should remember that the themes and style of Gothic were not in themselves entirely revolutionary or groundbreaking. Enlightenment literature had already undergone a kind of "counter-reformation" before Gothicism. From the second quarter of the eighteenth century onward, writers and artists in England had been revising their attitude towards "nature" and "feeling". In poetry, however, the change was gradual and pessimistic, giving rise to melancholy depictions of dark cemeteries haunted by the shades of the departed. The graveyard poets took their subject matter from the ubiquitous spectacle of mortality and made of it an *aesthetic* of inevitable dissolution and decay. A new piquancy was given to old-fashioned superstitions in the very middle of the so-called age of reason.¹¹ These graveyard poets stimulated a taste for morbid elements which would find fuller, more dramatic expression in Gothic. They were also the early forerunners of the Romantic movement, which emphasized the mysterious regions of instinct, of feeling and the senses, and the subtle relations between man and nature.

Gothic settings, the genre's medieval castles, secret passages, dungeons, and atmosphere of tenebrous gloom broken only by the alarming intrusion of supernatural presences, all serve the primary motive of instilling fear in the reader just as the morgues and tombstones of the Graveyard School had done. Indeed, there was already a craze for faux-medieval "fragments".¹² However, in the hands of Walpole's successors, the Gothic genre also incorporated other developments in eighteenth century thought: religious scepticism, excessive sensibility, liberationist ideas of individualism, revolution and freedom. These strategies provided a different kind of pleasure for a reading public weary of Enlightenment decorum and philosophical positivism in art and literature. Ironically, even the feelings of revulsion occasioned by such works were themselves a source of aesthetic and emotional pleasure. Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*, written in 1756, seven years before the publication of *The Castle of Otranto*, and a source of inspiration for the writers of Gothic literature, deals with the paradoxical relationship between pain and pleasure in art: for him, the function of art is to provoke the strongest and deepest emotions, which he defines as "sublime", and the ideas of pain are much stronger than the ideas of pleasure in creating sublimity. "The ideas of pain, sickness, and death fill the mind with strong emotions of horror; but life and health, though they put us in a capacity of being affected with pleasure ... make no such impression."¹³ The passions, therefore, which are linked to the preservation of the individual, turn chiefly on pain and the perception of danger: they are the most powerful of all passions. He goes on to argue that "in grief, the pleasure is still uppermost; and the affliction we suffer has no resemblance to absolute pain".¹⁴ Burke separates absolute pain from this pain of a positive nature; he sees this kind of

pain as a spur towards the sublime, a reaction against "indifference, the natural and common state of man".¹⁵

Gothic, therefore, can be defined as a *provocative* genre which aims at stimulating some sort of awareness in the reader, rousing him from dogmatic slumbers. The latent aim of fear (this "positive" fear) is to create strong passions, and hence, to elevate the reader above the routine of everyday life and reality. Therefore, "the terrible or conversant objects" are instruments which help create an alternative form of "enlightenment". The Gothic novels operate in accordance with Burke's definition of the "sublime"; he claims that our moral feelings, like our "good taste", are not in the least involved, while dealing with the concept of pleasure, and that no passions seem to excite us as much as fear and awe. Gothic fiction bears this out. Reason, the most reliable of human faculties, seems to be absent from these works; the dramatic construction, the mimetic principle, and the characters' psychology all display asymmetry, even grotesqueness. The profound interest in such works shows that much of the fascination with human nature resides in the disproportionate or monstrous: this is perhaps the other face of human nature and Gothic novels' interest lies in this "other".

The idea of the "other", a *counterpart* (or counterpoint) to Augustan standards, is at the heart of Gothic's appeal. To ensure that the reader feels a "sublime" emotion, rather than pure revulsion or identification with the *dramatis persona*, the threat in Gothic novels is distanced¹⁶ : the settings are usually the "unenlightened" or "barbarous" Middle Ages, and the dogmatic Catholic societies of Southern Europe, especially Spain and Italy. The past (seen in terms of an apparently never-ending "Dark Ages") is recast by Gothic writers as

a nightmare. There is a sense of repugnance: the barbarity and cruelty of pre-Reformation society is recognised and reviled--often through a lampoon on conservative Catholic Spain, perhaps the one country in Europe least touched by the Enlightenment. However, in its criticism of the materialist logic of the Enlightenment, and its emphasis on the need to re-establish some lost order, Gothic often appears *sympathetic* to the hitherto derided Age of Faith. There is an attraction towards the Middle Ages as a setting, and a hint that the medieval Weltanschauung may, after all, offer an equally valid way of engaging with the world. Furthermore, this pseudo-medieval setting is used as a metaphor to suggest something alarmingly identical (or at least analogous) to the sentimental society of England. The settings may be archaic, but the characters' behaviour remains "modern"--although scarcely in a way to inspire respect for the Augustan way of life: the defining sentiments of the age, as Gothicists portray it, are hypocrisy, credulity and vacillation.

As well as utilising medieval settings and images, the gothicists borrowed various motifs from ancient and modern genres: they used the elements of legend, myth, fairy tale, romance, and tragedy. Unlike the Augustans (or the Graveyard poets), the writers of Gothic were not the disciples of a single movement or single ideology. As Punter remarks, "In looking at the Gothic fiction of the 1790s, it is important to keep in mind that this was not a strange outcropping of one particular literary genre, but a form into which a huge variety of cultural influences, from Shakespeare to 'Ossian', from medievalism to Celtic nationalism flowed".¹⁷ Even Eastern genres and motifs such as the fairy tale and the supernatural story are combined with Western literary devices. Gothic, with these genres grafted on, makes a curious hybrid, a hothouse bloom. The

Gothic writers confronted the diverse nature of man and society, and reflected it in the diverse generic structures of their works. Romance elements give the heroes their dramatic stature, while tragic motifs inform the nature of the Gothic villain. Ambition and naive self-confidence -- all characteristics of Enlightenment society -- are manifested by both the good and the bad characters, but their rationalism (or scepticism) cannot save them from the vengeance of superior powers. The antagonistic forces arrayed against both villains and heroes come from even older sources: they are figures from legend and fairy tale who represent the schism between past and present, and the possible catastrophic consequences of such mutual alienation.¹⁸ The followers of this tradition violated the Augustan concept of aesthetics as well as morality. The very form, the multi-generic (or complex) nature, of Gothic novels has subsequently led to rather partial analyses, or indeed simple confusion. Alok Bhalla argues in *The Cartographers of Hell* that the

Gothic novel is neither mimetic in its actions, nor ordered in its structure; its excessive maniacal movement from one orgiastic episode to another can be mistaken to teach nothing, to have no ethical or spiritual density.¹⁹

The lack of verbal, thematic and structural wholeness; the use of folklore elements, magic and the supernatural were considered contemptible because there was *apparently* no clarity of thought, no idea of aesthetic, and no didactic message at the end. As a hybrid form, Gothic often features a rather tortuous style -- and literary analysis of that style is not always complimentary. Nevertheless, it may reveal the actual (and unacknowledged) polymorphous diversity (as well as perversity) of an age whose culture is too often lauded for

its homogeneity. If Gothic lacks verbal or thematic unity, and is rarely didactic, then its rambling, inchoate structure has its own mimetic symmetry: it parallels the chaotic social structure of the age and the traumatic condition of the individual. Furthermore, another kind of mimesis in Gothic, that of pervasive supernaturalism and the use of fanciful occurrences, is both a reflection of and a response to the concrete reality of the outside world: it symbolically refers to the more irrational (and less overt) dilemmas of man. The promiscuous use of various literary genres enables Gothic not only to eschew the spurious patterns of aesthetics, but also to reveal the asymmetrical and discordant side of man. That was what interested gothicists most: even in their more didactic moments, they were more concerned to satirise or castigate human folly than to praise any notable achievements of their own age. Gothic shows man his own vanity both in and out of his social milieu; it makes him discern, from an impartial viewpoint, his place in the universe. More topically, the apocalyptic conclusions of these works are suggestive of an inevitable (whether eagerly-anticipated or long-dreaded) revolution.

Thus, paradoxically, this undidactic genre tacitly challenged the normative structure of society, violating the standards defined by the Enlightenment and its subsidiary schools. The major poets of the period--1770-1820--were strongly affected by Gothic in one form or another. This was not merely a passive receiving of influence: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Keats all played a part in shaping the Gothic, in articulating a set of images of terror which were to exercise a potent influence over later literary history. The Romantics recognized this genre as a "cruel discourse on the political, economic and sexual structures of the age",²⁰ as an indirect attack on

the decadently automative system which rationalism had produced. The Romantics too saw that man's nature was not totally rational, or explicable by reason. They also bore witness to the way in which Enlightenment rationalism created materialism and thus injustice among people, just as its sociological progeny, utilitarianism, would do. Consequently, as redefined by Romantics like Mary Shelley, Gothic became a vehicle for reaction to the dogma of reason.

Though the hybrid structure of Gothic works is heterogeneous to the point of being laboured and confused, and they rarely sustain any emotional note other than that of suspense, still reading these works may be intellectually rewarding: the pleasure one gets from Gothic is that of contemplation of the sublimity of the concepts these works deal with, as well as the purely visceral thrill of tension and resolution in these narratives. In disparaging or abolishing the imposed self-centered, egotistic identities created by the official, dominant culture, Gothic offers a more truly "universal" identity, combining man's present with his past, and his subconscious with his conscious. This dissertation concentrates upon five prominent Gothic texts: *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Monk*, (and its later tribute or pastiche *Melmoth the Wanderer*,) and *Frankenstein*.²¹ These particular novels best communicate the social and intellectual rifts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and also exemplify the most sophisticated (or at least most complex) use of conventional Gothic machinery and narrative strategies, themselves flouting the Augustan concept of "decorum", undermining the social and intellectual stability of the age. In the analysis of these five novels, the genre's development will be traced with reference to pertinent "background" information: this will involve a very basic psychological reading and brief account of social problems (contemporary

as well as "universal") and the literary and intellectual disputes that informed the constantly mutating form and subject matter of Gothicism.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

¹David Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (New York: Longman, 1980) 5. Punter tries to draw a parallel between the historical use of the term and its literary context.

²C. Hugh Holman, William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1992) 217.

³A typical Augustan critic, Thomas Green, found William Godwin's *St. Leon* "inexpressibly hideous and revolting". (See Alok Bhalla, *The Cartographers of Hell* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private, Ltd., 1991) 3. A similar harsh assessment can be found in Thomas Roscoe's charge that "the Gothic novel offends public morality and violates accepted canons of aesthetic and cultural order founded on common sense and reason". (Bhalla 3.) It was, after all, not written for the salon. It was an unabashedly popularist genre, for all the middle class or aristocratic background of most of the authors, and their (occasionally wearying) habit of wearing their erudition on their sleeves. Although most contemporary critics denounced such works, the increasing interest in them proved that there were actually two different tastes existing side by side: the official culture created by the Augustans, which mainly appealed to Enlightenment intellectuals, and the actual taste of the masses.

⁴Many modern critics touch upon the mechanics of Gothic style in literature. Brendan Hennessy, for example, associates Gothicism with Medieval and anachronistic overtones, but does not address the reasons *why* pseudo-medievalism played such a large part in the genre. (See Brendan Hennessy, *The Gothic Novel* [London: Longman, 1987] 7.) Margaret L. Carter subsumes all that is startling or original in Gothic under the heading of romance. (See Margaret L. Carter, *Specter or Delusion* [Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1987] 5.) Only Victor Sage takes a wider view when he claims that "'Gothic' connotes a whole complex of theological ideas of a predominantly, if not exclusively, Protestant variety". (Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* [London: Macmillan, 1988] xxii.) He not only locates this movement within a specifically Protestant paradigm, but sees it as analogous to Protestantism itself, as a literature of dissent. John Allen Stevenson is more direct, less metaphorical: "There is probably also truth in the supposition . . . that *Otranto* is a symptom of reaction against rationalism in philosophy and decorum in literature that had dominated the first two-thirds of the eighteenth

century, an age whose only requirement, Walpole said, was "*cold reason*". (See John Allen Stevenson, *The British Novel, Defoe to Austen* [Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990] 92.)

⁵ See John Cottingham, *Rationalism* (London: Paladin Books, 1984) 144-146. The word "paradigm" here, as throughout the text, should be taken to denote a social model, rooted in a specific period of history, with its own way of perceiving and interacting with the world (that way being susceptible to disproof or invalidation later)-- in other words, in its Kuhnian sense, rather than as a synonym for "example". Thomas Kuhn's idea of paradigms and paradigmatic shifts is particularly applicable to a study of the Gothic genre, which on the surface appears to have little connection with the age that created it, at best a square peg in a round hole, at worst only an irrelevant byproduct of its age. In creating Gothicism, the eighteenth century provided itself with a satirical, sardonic mirror image, or *Doppelganger*, which came to *replace* its object of mockery as a form of expression.

⁶ Indeed, some have chosen to see it as no more than an artificial ludic correlative to Sentimentalism itself, an equally gratuitous eccentricity. Johan Huizinga, for example, asks the same rhetorical question of the Gothicists as of the Sentimentalist and Romantics: "How far were they 'in earnest'? Which professed the time-style more sincerely and experienced it more profoundly: the Humanists of an earlier century or the Romantics and 'sensitives' of the eighteenth and nineteenth? It would seem undeniable that the former were more convinced of the classical ideal than the devotees of the Gothic were of their hazy, dreamified Past." (Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* [London: Paladin 1970] 217.) The oneiric quality of the Gothic will be addressed in this dissertation; however, it is more pertinent to ask how convinced the Gothicists were of the reality of their own time.

⁷ The Encyclopedistes and their British correspondents were as confident as the Rationalists that in Descartes' *lumen rationalis* there would be no problem unresolved. They were following the tenets of Spinoza, who said "The purpose of Nature is to make man uniform, as children of a common mother". (Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* [New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960] 392.) Likewise, Alexander Pope stated in his *Essay on Man* that "the science of human nature (may be) like all other sciences reduced to a few clear points". (Edward McNall Burns, Robert E. Lerner, et al., *Western Civilisation* [New York: Norton, 1984] 637.) However, in their reliance upon painstakingly empirical *a posteriori* findings and their devotion

to the simplification and standardization of thought and life, the Augustan critics reduced man almost to a behavioristic, materialist cipher.

⁸ Onora O'Neil notes two interpretations of the eighteenth century: in one "reason and science are the progenitors, and justice, peace, and democracy the children of Enlightenment", but in the other "the triumph of reason and science has destroyed not only religion but morality, not only tradition but human bonds. The legacy of Enlightenment is a world of isolated and alienated individuals who find to their horror that nihilism, terror, domination, and the destruction of the natural world are the true offspring of the Enlightenment." Onora O'Neil, "Enlightenment as Autonomy: Kant's Vindication of Reason," *The Enlightenment and Its Shadow*, ed. Peter Hulme (London: Routledge, 1990) 186.

⁹ Jay Bernstein, in discussing Rousseau's *Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Man* sees human egoism as a historical product: "Egoism and instrumental rationality, which together generate the idea of persons as each seeking to maximize their individual happiness, are products of historical development, not natural attributes of persons". (Jay Bernstein, "Difficult Difference: Rousseau's Fictions of Identity," *The Enlightenment and its Shadow*, 69.) Thus he covertly attacks the Enlightenment itself for producing the Industrial Revolution, thereby making competitive materialism a virtue.

¹⁰ Derek Jarrett, *The Sleep of Reason* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988) 10.

¹¹ As Devandra P. Varma remarks, "Such was the fear of death, which found expression in poetry when Young, in the years 1742-45, published his *Night Thoughts*; and Blair, *The Grave*, in 1743". Devandra P. Varma, *The Gothic Flame* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1987) 28.

¹² See Chris Baldick's *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (Oxford: Oxford UP., 1992). The examples Baldick gives are Anna Laetitia Aikin's *Sir Bertrand: A Fragment* (1773), and *Raymond: A Fragment* (1799) by the pseudonymous "Juvenis"

¹³ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford UP., 1990) 34.

¹⁴ Burke 34.

¹⁵ Burke 34.

¹⁶ For Burke, if the threat is an actual one, it only creates positive pain, but if it is distanced, it creates a "sublime" reaction. However, this distancing is one of culture only: the psychological distance between the reader and the text which the Gothicists tried to achieve owes more to Burke than to actual medieval works, where the "distancing" is both more ludic and more religious, emphasising the spiritual trials of the protagonists and aiming to inspire greater devotion to courtly Christian ideals--those same ideals which are frequently mocked in Gothic.

¹⁷ Punter 99.

¹⁸ Although supernatural powers constitute the external antagonists and adversaries, they are a metaphor, like Leviathan, for the social structure, the system which creates (or is geared towards creating) uniform human beings. In this respect Gothic works are not nightmares transcribed, but fears recast into communicable forms--a coherent, related, yet separate reality. Punter asserts that "the terror is not a nightmare, but the freezing touch of reality" (Punter 113). Gothic, in this sense, satisfies a need: it abolishes the standards of rationalist thought (through violating taste, natural good sense, historical and political tradition) and concentrates on metaphysical and psychological truth. In Gothic, the author communicates the incommunicable with symbols and refers to a hidden (indeed "occult") order of reality, either psychologically internalized and microcosmic, or metaphorically externalized and macrocosmic.

¹⁹ Bhalla 13.

²⁰ Bhalla 13.

²¹ Other prominent authors associated with the Gothic genre will only be given passing mention where relevant--Beckford's *Vathek* is a product of the same privileged background and craze for the exotic as *Otranto*, and is indeed seminal in terms of Orientalist fiction, but is less influential on Gothic than it is on other forms of Romantic nineteenth century writing. Likewise Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* is really no more Gothic than Sir Walter Scott's novels. There is more to Gothic than archaic or exotic locations, and the five novels chosen

here best embody other resonances within the genre than the fascination that one culture or historical paradigm held for another.

CHAPTER I

The Sins of Fathers: from Romance back to Ritual

Horace Walpole, fourth Earl of Oxford and youngest son of Robert Walpole, had a long and productive life: as Member of Parliament for twenty-six years; writer of essays, voluminous correspondence and memoirs; and as antiquarian with a taste for Gothic architecture. He indulged this latter taste by turning his home at Strawberry Hill, near London, into a "little Gothic castle". This attracted a certain amount of attention, but was seen, in general, merely as the whim of an eccentric. His novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, was perceived as a similar extravagance, and yet was a success: it was received with great zeal by a reading public hungry for magic and mystery after many decades of rationalism, and keen to devour any fictitious account of medieval life.

In the preface to the second edition of *Otranto*, Walpole explains his successful formula as an attempt "to blend two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern", and states his reason for this synthesis: "In the former all was *imagination and improbability*: in the latter, *nature* is always intended to be, and sometimes has been copied with success".¹ (emphasis mine) Complaining in a letter about the *official* culture of his own age, which seemed to require "*cold reason*"², he, like his reading public, refused to accept the dictates of Augustan literary (and philosophical) decorum. Yet neither was he totally satisfied with the extravagance and improbability of anterior literary traditions. Indeed, one might concur with Huizinga that "Perusing [Walpole's letters] one becomes increasingly aware that this remarkable man, the father of Romanticism if ever it had one, still remained extremely classicist in his views and convictions."³

Through *Otranto* he claims to have achieved, not an innovation, but an interaction between the "ancient" and the "modern". This amalgamation also came to constitute the basis and the template for a wholly *new* genre, culminating in the later gothic novels: it became the origin and inspiration for the Gothic sensibility from which came a torrent of literature.

When Walpole speaks of two kinds of "romance", he is referring to two different cultures: the "sentimental" culture of his own ("rational") age, which discarded the past from its agenda, and an "archaic" culture based on the "irrational" and the "fantastic". The revisionist tendency within Neo-Classical positivism could lead to denigration of any literature dealing with the now obsolete concepts of pre-Reformation Europe as being "wholly fanciful pieces of folly that served no useful moral purpose".⁴ Walpole himself sees a deficiency in both the sentimental and the archaic cultures, and their literatures. Through the conflict in *Otranto* between stereotypically "sentimental" and "feudal" characters, a paradoxically symbiotic relation between the ancient and the modern is described. This defines the function of the Gothic genre: in bringing the opposites together it provokes, after all, a fresh thought, a new "enlightenment" in the reader.

A taste for paradox, and a desire to explore the internal tensions of life had already emerged in eighteenth century literature, with the morbid fantasies of the "Graveyard poets".⁵ They dwelt upon the apparent contradiction of death's presence within life, thereby subverting the comforting opposition between life and death, and acknowledging the hitherto taboo concepts, not of mortality *per se*, but of decay and dissolution. Life is redefined in the context of its opposite and nemesis. Such a reevaluation of life naturally evokes feelings of

dread and melancholy, but such emotions also provide new insight into the "meaningful contradiction" of human existence. Edmund Burke was the first to analyse the nature of such paradoxes, and to note the "sublimity"⁶ of the emotions evoked. Walpole, likewise, addresses another paradoxical relationship--not principally that of life and death, as later Gothic writers were to do, but that of the ancient, or anachronistic, and the modern. His willingness to incorporate barbarism defamiliarises the world as it was seen by his "sentimental" readership. His method of making the grotesque appear familiar, or the familiar appear grotesque leads to a sensation of the uncanny. In this respect, all the seemingly most implausible, or gratuitous, devices in the novel help to introduce a new "perception", thereby provoking a "sublime" reaction not only to the ostensible subject matter, but to the sentimental culture which defined itself in opposition to that half-remembered age of chaos.⁷ Walpole thus challenges the established and approved reactions of Augustan readers through the uncanny resonances of his novel. By turning the real into the imaginary, and the imaginary into the real, he subverts Augustan "objective" presuppositions as to what should be criteria for acceptance (whether that be simply credence or active assent) and rejection.

To provide his new "rationale" with a suitable mode of expression, Walpole needed to be inventive in imagery, if not wholly original in style. It may be true that "half from caprice, half from 'spleen' . . . he was only dallying with moods and fancies,"⁸ and it is certainly true that the novel could not possibly fool anyone into believing that it is an accurate depiction of medieval life. However, these weaknesses or carelessnesses are, paradoxically, the novel's strength: Walpole treated neither history nor aesthetics as sacred, and so created

a work both idiosyncratic and representative of the opposing sentiments (and conflicting tastes) of his age and social milieu. He manages to bring together the abandoned literary forms and their supernatural representations within a more naturalistic vehicle, albeit one which was not altogether an artistic triumph, as "that first and awkward specimen of the thriller in medieval setting".⁹ He associates the ancient order with old literary motifs derived from tragedy, romance, legend, and fairy tale, but true to the literary conventions of his day, he incorporates these forms and devices into a *novel*. In *Otranto* there is a tragic "hero" of sorts who falls, and a more melodramatic protagonist, whose fate is only slightly less dispiriting; there are chivalry and love, there is a kind of Attic justice in which old crimes are avenged by a legendary figure, and by Providence.

The novel is not, of course, a simple dramatic exposition or illustration of theories of the Tragic. A great deal of it is, to the sophisticated modern reader as it was to the Augustan purist, resoundingly melodramatic, middle-brow stuff. It incorporates all the most obvious motifs of barbarity to titillate the eighteenth century reader. As regards purely atmospheric devices, the wind moans, doors creak, the moon casts a flickering light, several ghosts walk and speak, and something terrifying waits at the top of the stairs; and all takes place in the forbidden and, to an English audience, provocative, Roman Catholic world of medieval Italy. Walpole, however, makes the uncanny and the grotesque appear alarmingly familiar especially through their acceptance by sentimental characters placed in unusual circumstances: he makes the horror element possible and admissible for the rational reader. Although he evokes all the magic, the marvels of medieval chivalry, he never neglects the reality of his own

time, and always suggests that behind those images lie resonant and tangible contemporary issues.¹⁰ This gives him the chance both to cast the eighteenth century "romance" in the form of its archaic progenitor, and to reevaluate the medieval "romance" from the viewpoint of the sentimental.¹¹

The Castle of Otranto tells the story of Manfred, prince of Otranto by virtue of his grandfather's usurpation of the property from its rightful owner. The tale recounts Manfred's attempt to secure his rights and perpetuate his lineage, and his ultimate tragic downfall. The past sins of Manfred's ancestors fall both on Conrad, Manfred's sickly son, and on Manfred himself, punished through the extension of this curse onto his blameless daughter Matilda. Conrad is crushed by a gigantic helmet on the day of his proposed wedding to Isabella, daughter of Frederick, another noble. The helmet miraculously comes from the statue of the original owner, Alfonso, the legendary prince of Otranto. Manfred's fall is thus provoked by his stubbornness (or his courage and rebellion) in ignoring an ancient prophecy. A romance hero emerges in the unlikely shape of a young peasant, Theodore, who dares to repeat the curse and is subsequently blamed for the catastrophe. Manfred decides, though already married, that he himself must marry Isabella in order to produce an heir, thereby forestalling his pre-ordained fall from power. Isabella flees from the castle, aided by Theodore. However, Theodore is captured. A friar, Jerome, intercedes, and discovers the youth to be his long-lost son. Theodore is helped to escape by Matilda. Meanwhile, Frederick, Isabella's father, and Theodore both become enamoured of Matilda. Manfred, finding Theodore and Matilda in the chapel and, in the gloom, believing Matilda to be Isabella, stabs and kills her. This, it is suggested, is a punishment for past sins--the consummation of

Manfred's fall. Jerome and Theodore are revealed as the true heirs to Otranto and, with a clap of thunder and a clanking of ghostly chains, the castle crumbles into ruins. Although the tale concludes with the expected marriage of Theodore and Isabella, the novel aims, through such complete destruction, at a cathartic conclusion which arouses pity and fear.

Walpole's insistence that the original story was "written . . . between 1095, the era of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards"¹² increases the tale's atmosphere of mystery, and is obviously intended to inspire the reader with even more awe. The choice of the Middle Ages as a setting, and the utilisation of received half-truths regarding this so-called barbaric period as topoi within the story are not coincidences: there was a growing taste for such literary follies, as the abundance of half-completed "fragments" of spurious romances shows. The pseudo-antiquarian tone of the preface declares the novel to be a translation of a medieval Italian story printed in 1529 and written at the time of the Crusades: such fraudulent introductions cast as bibliographies were common in such follies. The clichés and stereotypes and secondhand "interpretations" or "impressions" found in these works were less evidence of the (usually anonymous) authors' interest in history than of their ability to plagiarise historiography. The undiscerning public took these hackneyed and barely accurate images as metonyms of the age thus distorted.¹³ Thereby, the dilettantes of the eighteenth century could safely immerse themselves in the miseries of the "Dark Ages"--the horrors of which they had, by and large, *created* for their own entertainment.¹⁴ If *Otranto* does not provide the reader with a painstakingly researched, "authentic" account of the details of life in the Middle Ages, either, at least Walpole's artistic motives are more

interesting than the simple evocation of a vicarious thrill in depicting a *version* of the unsettling past. Indeed, the pretence that his work was a translation appears little more than a joke, a hoax, on his part. Walpole conjures up a general sense of antiquity, but only by presenting--on the surface level--an eighteenth century view of feudalism, aristocracy, and, most importantly, *religion*. Walpole initiates the Gothic tradition whereby feudalism and Catholicism are used as themes to suggest the anxieties of eighteenth century English readers. Their distrust of superstition and ultramontane tyranny, their fear of a descent into feudal barbarity, their contempt for the arbitrary rule of European despots (or indeed Oriental ones!) all find expression through Walpole's choice of setting.

Catholic Italy is a tangible representation of the dystopia that England prided itself on avoiding--yet it is also a reminder of England's own derided and discarded past. It should thus discomfort the rationalist unwilling to acknowledge this legacy. Chris Baldick remarks in the introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* that "A Gothic novel or tale will almost certainly offend classical tastes and rational principles, but it will not do so by urging any positive view of the Middle Ages".¹⁵ Walpole's medievalism merely helps to propagate anti-classical sentiment, and hence, opens the way towards a re-evaluation of sentimental culture. The archaic tone does not necessarily imply total devotion to the medieval ideal: there is a constant tension between nostalgia for and horror at the excesses of the past. This tension between attraction and repulsion propels *Otranto*, creating a paradoxical feeling of "sweet terror" through the combination of these opposite sentiments. The battle between rationalism and superstition was by no means decisively won by the proponents

of Enlightenment, as the tension between these opposites in *Otranto* suggests.¹⁶ Walpole's depiction of the medieval world in *Otranto* is not an idealised panegyric;¹⁷ the past is no safe retreat even for those in revolt against the positivist philosophy of the eighteenth century. Walpole's own ambiguous attitude towards the "Dark Ages" captured the unconscious confusion of society and of individuals over the wealth of conflicting and partisan interpretations of the past. The choice of the medieval world as a setting facilitates a caricature of Augustan England's most demonised counterparts: the Catholic hegemony of Pre-Reformation Europe, the "backward" states of the Mediterranean, and even the Islamic East. The themes of Catholicism and feudalism in Walpole and their recurrence in later examples of Gothic fiction indicate a propensity in these writers towards *polarisation*, and the definition of sentimental attitudes through their opposites. The novel defines what eighteenth century England is through what it is not. The demarcation of cultures could appear Manichaeian, were it not for the constant suggestion of *attraction* towards these despised or abjured "others".

Walpole's depiction of the feudal world, Catholicism, and their monsters, is not one drawn purely from the Western tradition. He consciously sets his story at the time of the Crusades, the time of cultural exchange -- or tension-- between East and West. The medieval heritage of Europe is defamiliarised by a reminder of its counterpart, an "enemy"¹⁸ whose contribution to the culture of the West was just then, in Walpole's time, being acknowledged.¹⁹ Walpole applies both eastern and western folkloric elements to the story, best seen in the treatment of the gigantic (monstrous, in all senses) apparition of Alfonso, and of the half-sentimental, half-classically tragic, operations of Providence. *Otranto*,

therefore, manages to reintegrate these cultural motifs from outside the Christian tradition within an apparently respectable tale of chivalry from the Age of Faith. The giantlike figure of a knight in the novel and similar magical occurrences are probably Walpole's greatest innovations, very much emulated in subsequent Gothic novels. The opening, "Manfred, the prince of Otranto, had one son and one daughter . . ." ²⁰ reads like a fairy tale, with its irrational parent, one lovely and one unlovely child. Walpole maintains this fabulous tone throughout the novel by augmenting European folklore, and its legends and romances, with fairy tale motifs. These, incidentally, were also drawn from that other "other" of the Augustan age, the Islamic East.²¹ In *Vathek* Beckford was to make the setting completely Oriental, and there are many fairy tale motifs that evoke sublimity through natural and supernatural descriptions.²² Furthermore, the apparition seen by Bianca when she was rubbing her ring suggests the tale of *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* from *The Arabian Nights*.²³ An inexplicable appearance like this is hardly Occidental, and produces not only a feeling of terror, but also recognition of the implacability of higher powers. Likewise, the enormous size of Alfonso's apparition suggests his potentially despotic power. However, Walpole also depicts Alfonso as a legendary Christian figure; he associates him with the Church of St. Nicholas, which makes him half-saint, as well as mythic hero of medieval romance.

Given the role that the Anglican Church still played in respectable society in the eighteenth century--perhaps no longer as a spiritual force, but as a means of providing social cohesion--Walpole could hardly have written a work in which some vestiges of Christian dogma did not remain (unless he were to launch an attack on the supposed degeneracy of another culture's faith, as

Beckford later did in *Vathek*). Any undermining of Anglican tenets, however satirical or ludic, was bound to approximate to heresy. However, Walpole's choice of an archaic superstitious *Catholic* society allows him to reintroduce into literature that which was being weakened in life: the supernatural. Almost all Gothic writers utilised supernatural motifs, although the degree to which they are accorded importance or verisimilitude varies. In *The Monk*, Lewis makes use of fairy tale elements: the magic mirror and myrtle of Matilda. He also, like Maturin after him, makes frank use of Christian demonology. In *Frankenstein* the fairy tale is displaced by the myth of Prometheus, but the Monster retains the physical appearance of an ogre and the malignity and pathos of European folklore's dwarves, goblins and genies.²⁴ All these elements are used to evoke images of an age and creed (or creeds) thought outworn. *Otranto's* Sibylline prophecy of misfortune for the protagonist is itself a folkloric element (as well as an indication of a growing Orientalist reappraisal of doctrines of predestination and kismet)²⁵. An ancient prophecy, introduced early in *Otranto* indicates that Manfred has an immutable fate, not to be changed by human endeavour. He is doomed by long established ruling powers, as he knows. All his actions are ascribed to his

dread of seeing accomplished an ancient prophecy which was said to have pronounced, *that the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it.*²⁶

This prophecy engages even the modern reader, creating both dread and resigned acceptance of its inevitability. By implying the reassertion of the feudal system--that Manfred would be expelled when the legitimate prince was grown--

Walpole addresses the collective neurosis of an age which had lost touch with the archaic and the "backward", but expected their dreadful return. The helmet which crushes Conrad is "an hundred times more large than any helmet ever made for human body"²⁷, conveying the proportion of the danger. As we proceed through the novel, we see first the helmet; then a little later, a "foot and part of a leg" (also "clad in armor");²⁸ then the "gigantic sword" that Frederick's men carry;²⁹ and finally the huge hand in armour that Bianca spots at the top of the stairs.³⁰ If these pieces are unified, a gigantic and despotic knight in armour will emerge. The assembling of these parts, which creates the dreadful, giant-like figure, evokes the dread that the feudal system may re-animate itself. To maintain the suspense, such a reassembling does not occur until the apocalyptic conclusion. Like the heroes in fairy tales, Manfred, too, fruitlessly attempts to ward off the realization of the prophecy, despite assurances from above that the divination cannot be contradicted. The credence the novel's characters place in the ancient prophecy is not merely an echo of similar historical oracular pronouncements,³¹ but a way to suggest what the age has unthinkingly discarded: the security of religious dogma, and the marvels and mysteries of the past. The surprising resonance of these archetypes creates a sense of equivocation³² and hence leads to the free play of mind necessary to make Augustan readers see the other (albeit equally dogmatic) side of existence.

Walpole detaches himself from both the imitative and didactic authorial requirements of his age, thus allowing him to make a critique of such, much mocked, dogmas. In the second edition he even feigns dissatisfaction with the moral of the "original, translated, story": "Yet I am not blind to my author's defects. I could wish he had grounded his plan on a more useful moral than this;

that *the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation.*"³³ Such a disclaimer appears to invalidate the worth of such a text, castigating it as an archaic survival unworthy of note in an enlightened age-- however, since the novel is Walpole's *own work*, the critique need not be taken too seriously. Certainly, such a bleak meting out of vengeance on the innocent was bound to offend Neo-classical literary taste (although it should not have been *unfamiliar* to a readership brought up on the curse on the house of Atreus!). This is not only a religious motif found in both Classical Greek Drama and the Old Testament; it is a symbolic account of the social dynamics of tradition, heritage, and inheritance in Augustan society. Walpole proposes no other moral in the story, but rather furnishes Gothic fiction with what was to become perhaps its most prevalent theme.

The inevitability of any revisiting of the sins of the fathers upon their children was no longer unquestioningly accepted in the rationalist eighteenth century. However, its currency still stood as a reproach and a threat to the vanity of a society which was trying to disavow any link with or debt to its own past. Walpole takes this threat, and the anxiety it engendered, as his starting point. In an age obsessed by progress and posterity, men were keen to be *remembered well*, and yet, somewhat smugly, did not extend the posthumous generosity they themselves sought to the giants on whose shoulders they stood.³⁴ This theme was not peculiar to *Otranto*. In later Gothic fiction past sins lead to suffering on the part of both villains and heroes: Emily in *Udolpho* undergoes hardship on account of her father's bankruptcy, and her aunt's unfortunate marriage to Montoni; Raymond, in *The Monk*, is tormented by the Bleeding Nun, a long dead relative; Ambrosio's catastrophe is caused by his mother's abandonment of

him as a baby, and his consequent damaging convent education; Moncada in *Melmoth* suffers for his parents' "impropriety" and his illegitimate birth; Frankenstein's perversion of the parental role stems from his own sentimental education and pragmatic drive towards becoming the fulfilment of his family's hopes. Past sins haunt the present, turning the characters into passionate villains. In other words, in Gothic, the past wreaks its revenge on the present. Through this reevaluation of the past's relevance to, and hold over, the present, Walpole also effects confusion over the certainty of a *future*.

In Walpole's own "hero", Manfred, Gothic fiction finds its prototypical impious prince, pitting himself against a moralistic (but irrational) theocratic system. He is not only a representative of feudal mores, but an illustration of the way in which sentimental attitudes could be soured and perverted. Galvanised by the very eighteenth century notion of progress, he uses every possible means in his human power to achieve that end. He shows a Janus face --but his "flexibility" is hypocritical. He remains unassimilable into sentimental society. Although sworn to establish his own family line, he sacrifices that family to his individual passions. Such hypocrisy and ambition will also characterise later Gothic villains. Like Manfred, they too, will damage the very institutions they are a part of, and pretend to exalt.

On the other hand, Theodore, the symbol of the "good", stands for the credulous sentimentality of the age. As a peasant hero, he is a reminder of the agricultural society displaced by the urban way of life which Walpole found so unsatisfactory. Entering the castle of an aristocrat, he eventually becomes its owner. However, he is by no means the swain of sentimental pastorage; his bucolic milieu is a dark and threatening one. Although supported by Father

Jerome, Alfonso, and Providence, he, too, is ultimately a victim in the struggle for power since he also experiences the cruelty of all three. Despite the eventual triumph of Theodore, the nature of his victory (pyrrhic, to say the least) remains ambiguous.

Both Manfred and Theodore are equally sharply defined personalities in the novel. They reflect the two different moods of the age: Manfred is -- no matter how much his ambition may be rationalised by a sympathetic reader -- represented both by Walpole and by the other characters as exceptionally evil, and Theodore as excessively virtuous (to the point of being an anodyne cipher). The "character" of Isabella's father, Frederick, however, is more ambiguous. Just as his arrival to rescue his daughter is providential to the point of implausibility, so his continued presence in the castle appears gratuitous. He contributes little to events, occupying an ill-defined middle ground. Though he shows some personality traits of both the prince and the peasant, this does not imply synthesis or balance in Frederick between Theodore's virtue and Manfred's villainy. He is perhaps the most obvious incorporation within the novel of the eighteenth century's *own* stereotype. At the beginning he acts like a noble, knightly hero, but later he is pulled towards villainy. Since he has no unique identity, he is weak and vulnerable to corruption.

None of these characters are able to solve their various problems. Manfred cannot foresee the consequences of his materialism. Theodore, though honourable, is comically naive, and can bring only simple minded heroism to bear upon the complex issues which he must confront. Frederick, similarly, cannot surmount the problems which beset him. Lacking dynamism, character, and individuality, he is buffeted from one position to another according to the

dictates of Providence (or the exigences of the plot and the whims of the author!) Hence, the numinous existence of Providence becomes a "deus ex machina", an external means of solving human problems,³⁵ through a rather partisan form of "occasionalism": its indirect intervention, whether through the appearance of Alfonso, or the pervasive influence of the Church and Father Jerome provokes not only peripeteia but catastrophe. However, no human agency (least of all the feeble Theodore) has shown itself confident or competent enough to provide any other solution. Walpole's world of the feudal past, therefore, stands as the anachronistic, metaphorical reenactment (or *preenactment*) of the anxieties of the eighteenth century.

These anxieties are best embodied in the character of the usurping prince himself. The depiction of Manfred as a sentimentalized caricature of a feudal baron shows that Walpole, in fact, plays this fear of tyranny off against Augustan rationalism and propriety. In Walpole's pseudo-feudal world, power seems to have been shared between the Church and the Aristocracy. Manfred, however, is outside this system, and can be classified neither as aristocratic, nor as clerical. He is depicted as a typical bourgeois obsessed by the idea of progress, rather than "natural rights". Daring to break the taboo of the established rules of inheritance, he pits himself against the ruling order. Unsatisfied, dissident, in this regard he is as much Protestant as Protester: he defies not only the Church's hegemony but also "universal propriety", overseen by Providence, which (at least as far as Manfred is concerned) is shown as oppressive. Since Manfred disrupts this sacred order, he is a criminal, a rebel and a heretic: an opponent of the Architect of the world. He substitutes individualistic self advancement for obedience to divine decrees. He disdains

propriety, shows violence, and expects self-sacrifice from those around him. He ignores all admonitions and portents; refuses all chance of redemption, and shows no regret (until the very end).³⁶ Even the death of his son is not warning enough for Manfred. It only strengthens his resentment of the Divine Order and his consequent resolution against Providence.

However, in another sense, he is also the "victim" of a "vendetta" waged against him by the Church and by the numinous itself. As both villain and victim, his situation recalls not only Greek drama, but Revenge Tragedy--although Walpole, taking the motifs of usurpation and restitution, nevertheless gives them his own theological underpinning (something conspicuously lacking in Jacobean drama). Walpole confesses his debt to Shakespeare, whom he calls "the great master of nature", ³⁷ and the psychological complexity of Manfred recalls Hamlet as much as Claudius. Walpole's upstart is a more ambiguous creature than the rebel types of the later gothicists. Those later rebels actively and consciously collaborate with the Devil, and are directly involved in Satanic machinations as Manfred is not. The inspiration for these later anti-heroes lies less in *Otranto* than in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the theme of Satanism as initiated by the Romantic poets towards the end of the eighteenth century. Mario Praz remarks in *The Romantic Agony* that "Later it was Byron [and Shelley] who brought to perfection the rebel type, remote descendant of Milton's Satan".³⁸ Manfred is no Satanist; rather, he is a *sceptic*, an atheist only in the sixteenth and seventeenth century sense of the word.

Though a declared villain, there is still something appealing about Manfred. Examined closely, his morality has a surprising amount in common with a typical sentimental hero's, even though his presence in an archaic milieu

drags him down to the general level of barbarity of that age: as Walpole puts it, "Manfred was not one of those savage tyrants who wanton in cruelty unprovoked . . . his virtues were always ready to operate, when his passions did not obscure his reason"³⁹ The provocation which leads Manfred to obey his passions rather than his reason, however, comes with the threat to his social status. He "will use [all the] human means in [his] power for preserving [his] race",⁴⁰ and indeed claims that "neither heaven nor hell will impede my designs".⁴¹ The precarious position of that race calls to mind the struggle of the nascent bourgeoisie in England. No longer expecting any help from God, they relied only on their human (and rational) abilities for what is now termed "upward mobility".⁴² The "villainy" in the story, therefore, is only ambition, albeit one hypocritically hidden behind the pretext of provision for one's family. Such a desire was one of the driving forces behind the Augustan rage for order and progress, legitimised by the sentimental conception of the duties of a paterfamilias. Walpole bestows eighteenth century characteristics of reason and virtue on Manfred, even attributing the middle class concept of "duty" to him. Like a middle class parent, he expects Isabella to be dutiful. He asks Jerome "to return and bring the princess to her duty".⁴³ The virtues of hearth and home were seen, along with conformity to Anglican religious practice, as another cornerstone of propriety. The family, as the basic unit of society, was sacrosanct. However, Manfred's attitude towards his immediate kin is oddly unsympathetic. He treats them with contempt, and uses them to further his own very individualistic plans. Walpole's purpose in making Manfred so hypocritical is problematic: is he to be taken as a rebel against all the civilised mores of Augustan England, or as a metaphor for the eighteenth century's own ruthless

appropriation of domestic values for pragmatic ends? After his son's death Manfred proposes to Isabella even though such a marriage necessitates divorce from his patient, submissive wife Hippolita (a divorce which Manfred cynically and hypocritically insists is necessary in any case, due to consanguinity).⁴⁴ Likewise, although his daughter Matilda is depicted as beautiful, dutiful, and loving, she has no intrinsic value for the pragmatic Manfred till her death reminds him of human affection. He uses every possible (and immoral) means to perpetuate his worldly human establishment. Manfred wants to take his fate into his own hands.

At first refusing to acknowledge the existence of supreme powers, and later consciously defying their authority, he represents the single-minded materialistic and secular drives of the eighteenth century. His challenge to the long established institutions of religion and feudalism--in effect, his biting the hand that feeds him--is a reaction against the repression of human passions. It is at this point, ironically, that Walpole makes Manfred a tragic hero (or at least a prototype Romantic anti-hero). Indeed he is allowed repentance at the end. His problem is that of validation and acceptance. Manfred, as an individual, poses the question of man's place in the universe: this villain's appeal resides in the universal human drive towards establishment of an identity to assert existence:⁴⁵ an identity reached through one's own efforts--not one mutely accepted when bestowed from on high, either by temporal or spiritual authority.

Interestingly, nothing is said in the story about the origin of *Alfonso's* right to reign over Otranto. This theme also suggests the intellectual conflicts of the previous century over the precise function of civil government in social life. Manfred's struggle to liberate himself from the political, moral, and hierarchical

order of his society suggests the Hobbesian conception of the origins of political authority. What Hobbes asserts in *Leviathan* is that the sovereignty has legitimized its power through a contract for *salus populi* ⁴⁶(the people's safety). However, this eventually turned into a despotic and unjust system. Alfonso does not even require the peoples' assent, only the favour of Providence. Manfred does not conform to this fatalistic acceptance of the essentially arbitrary existing order. He is declared malevolent, because he maintains his secularism and rejects submission to any power; he liberates himself from the system of Providence and of her representatives. He relies only on his own initiative.⁴⁷ As such, a modern reader (and indeed Walpole's original readership) could be forgiven for identifying with the Prince, rather than with the oddly dull Theodore.

While Manfred's story carries tragic connotations, the adventures of Theodore constitute the romance part of *Otranto*. Although Walpole is aware of the Neo-Classical prejudice against romances, he reintroduces the elements of chivalry, gallantry, love, and adventure into the story to create a world not bound by the dictates of Augustan etiquette. Within it, however, Walpole recasts the aspirations of many Augustans. Theodore is first presented as a peasant, but rises to claim the power due to him as a noble.⁴⁸ He is, however, by no means dynamic. Divine powers assist Theodore, as they condemn Manfred. They help Theodore escape from the enormous helmet in which the wrathful Manfred confined him for repeating the old prophecy in the prince's presence. They also help him find his way in the dark passages and allow him to help Isabella escape from the castle(moonlight shines on the lock of the trap door) to the church of St.Nicholas. When compared with Manfred, this representative of the "good"

has nothing like a distinct identity. His role in the conflict between Alfonso and Manfred, and his passive status as an instrument of the vengeance of Father Jerome, Alfonso, and Providence, is that of a sentimental naif. He is blunt, instinctive, inexperienced, and indeed comic--a rustic adrift in a Machiavellian world.

Theodore, ready to sacrifice himself for the ladies in the castle, displays a startling passivity and lack of concern for his own life and safety (although not his honor): he does not protest against Manfred's threats of execution, frequently (and obsequiously) declaring his willingness to obey that tyrannous prince, saying "I answered to every question your highness put to me last night with the same veracity that I shall speak now . . . I am ready to give you all the satisfaction in my power".⁴⁹ He complains when he hears from Jerome that "It is sinful . . . to cherish those [Matilda] whom heaven has doomed to destruction. A tyrant's race must be swept from the earth to the third and fourth generation"⁵⁰ exclaiming, "Will heaven visit the innocent for the crimes of the guilty? . . . The fair Matilda has virtues enough . . ."⁵¹ Directed throughout by the invisible hand of Providence, all he achieves at the end is acceptance of his "fate".

Theodore's inability to act autonomously stems from the fact that he is the descendant of a feudal order. As such, his nobility--unlike Manfred's--is confirmed, and legitimised. However, he thereby loses any incentive towards that individualistic dynamism which Manfred must employ. The peasant hero turns out to be Father Jerome's son. (The friar "discovered the mark of a bloody arrow. Gracious heaven! cried the holy man standing, what do I see? It is my child, my Theodore.")⁵² When Jerome was young and belonged to one of the noble families of Sicily, he married Alfonso's unknown daughter, since deceased

(whereupon Jerome entered the service of the Church), and Theodore is the grandchild of Alfonso, and therefore, the true heir to Otranto. He is not only heir to the religious authority of Father Jerome, but also to the political authority of Alfonso. This double inheritance of Theodore is reminiscent of the position of Augustan England. Like the "good" hero of *Otranto*, eighteenth century England was hopeful about progress and humanism. However, the age also had to take over the legacy, or to carry the "birthmark", of the past. Theodore rationally (or naively) thinks that Matilda will be untouched by the curse--just as the rationalists thought they were safe from the threats of the "Dark Ages".

The character of Frederick, on the other hand, lacks the single-mindedness of either Manfred or Theodore. He can only ever vacillate between their respective positions, approximating first to the one's vice, then to the other's virtue. When he comes to Otranto castle to save his daughter from the villainous Manfred, he is depicted as a heroic figure; a Chaucerian "verray parfait knight" capable of changing the course of events. With his armed soldiers he besieges the castle and defies Manfred:

Fifty foot-guards with drums and trumpets closed the procession, which wheeled off to the right and left to make room for the principal knight. As soon as he approached the gate, he stopped; and the herald advancing, read again the words of the challenge.⁵³

However, this apparent embodiment of chivalry soon abandons his stance against Manfred, who manages to divert his attention to the charms of his daughter, Matilda. The paragon of the earlier description thus gives way to a weak opportunist who tries, through marriage to Matilda, simultaneously to

satisfy his sexual desires and capture the principedom of Otranto. Manfred and Frederick make a deal concerning their daughters:

Manfred, in the mean time, had broken his purpose to Frederick, and proposed the double marriage. That weak prince, who had been struck with the charms of Matilda, listened but too eagerly to the offer. He forgot his enmity to Manfred, whom he saw but little hope of dispossessing by force; and flattering himself that no issue might succeed from the union of his daughter with the tyrant, he looked upon his own succession to the principality as facilitated by the wedding to Matilda.⁵⁴

Frederick, like Radcliffe's very different Valancourt after him to some extent, exemplifies the vulnerability of the individual to corruption. He assumes two different postures in the story: the first close to Theodore's, the second reminiscent of Manfred's. No individual, unique personality of his own, however, ever appears. Paradoxically, it is through such a vacillating compound of others' second-hand traits that Walpole depicts perhaps the most realistic type of individual from his age. What makes him so vulnerable to corruption is precisely his lack of identity: a knightly dynamism which is all too easily translated into the opportunistic hubris of a calculating villain. Hypocrisy and crisis of identity become major themes in later Gothic works, as noble impulses (such as Ambrosio's original "noble frankness of . . . nature")⁵⁵ are soured or perverted by force of circumstance. However, Frederick's passivity allows him to retain one important and helpful trait: unlike Manfred, he is subject to fears of the numinous. (Though it may well be a poor sort of virtue which resides only in a lack of resolution.) However, whereas Manfred is incorrigible in his

devotion to self-advancement, even under pain of supernatural anathema, Frederick at least becomes credulous and respectful in the face of supreme powers:

The marquis [Frederick] was not surprised at the silence that reigned in the princess's apartment. Concluding her, as he had been advertised, in her oratory, he passed on . . . Pushing open the door gently, he saw a person kneeling before the altar . . . And then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederick the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl. Angels of grace, protect me! cried Frederick recoiling. Deserve their protection, said the spectre. Frederick, falling on his knees, adjured the phantom to take pity on him . . . But say, blest spirit, what is thy errand to me? what remains to be done? To forget Matilda! said the apparition--and vanished.⁵⁶

As a result of this warning, Frederick is reassimilated into the divinely ordered state of affairs. Purged of his earlier villainy, he once again becomes a standard-bearer of nobility. However, it cannot be claimed that he has reasserted autonomy by resisting Manfred's tempting offer. He is only corrected by a supreme power: his burgeoning individuality, first revealed as wilful and immoral, is then wholly suppressed.

Manfred, Theodore and Frederick are all representative characters of the Age of Reason. They are caricatures of the weaknesses of the eighteenth century--its credulity and opportunism--standing as allegorical emblems for the deficiencies of the age. If placed in the context of Walpole's initial attempt at amalgamating the "ancient" and the "modern", they compose the modern part of

the novel. *Otranto* suggests less the power relations of the Middle Ages, than the struggle of a particular class in England to take hold of power (legally granted the middle classes in 1832 with the First Reform Bill). As a statesman, and the son of a prime minister, Walpole must have been aware of this burgeoning phenomenon. However, he states in the "Preface" that he sees a certain spiritual emptiness and lack of foresight in his age. Hence, he creates an archaic and theocratic corollary to these modern, but arid drives. Careful not to praise the virtues of the past--since he draws the picture of a dark and barbaric Catholic world--he is after a middle-road which will be neither completely theocratic, nor purely profane and materialistic. Walpole shows the negative sides of both systems. Alfonso's takes its power from Providence, and is destructive. Before leaving Otranto, indeed, he demolishes everything. Manfred's system, on the other hand, is greedy and exploitative. Through the struggle between these two, Walpole hints at the consequences of both a secular human and a theocratic system. Both can end in tragedy: neither "one-sided" approach to existence offers any kind of "safe haven". Father Jerome, Alfonso, and Providence do not exactly inspire the reader with nostalgia. The concept of "poetic justice" in the story is quite odd and unsatisfactory. As Geary remarks, "In the final section of *Otranto*, the supernatural begins to lose its moral aspects as it manifests itself not as providential protection of innocence, but as pure divine wrath."⁵⁷ It is through the cathartic (or "sublime") conclusion of the tale that the two deficient worldviews make sense, and together create a new moral, a new and rather dispiriting "enlightenment". The "poetic justice" of providence is quite different from the human concept of justice. Having proclaimed Theodore the rightful heir, the vision of Alfonso ascends

heavenward, leaving Matilda to die, Theodore to brood over her amid the ruins of his inheritance and Manfred to retire to a holy cell where he will seek to ward off "the farther wrath of heaven".⁵⁸ This is the order and justice of Providence; innocents are also punished.

Old crimes are certainly avenged by Manfred's fall. However, though he repents at the end, it is too late to save his daughter from destruction. Theodore and Matilda fall in love, but providence, far from being their protector, blocks their hopes and becomes their punisher. This introduces the idea of a "jealous and unjust God" hostile to *His* creatures because of their ancestors' crimes; it also recalls the vengeance of the gods and furies in *The Oresteia*. When Manfred mistakenly stabs to death his daughter at the feet of Alfonso's statue, Jerome interprets the event not as a tragedy but as a sacrifice: "The blood of Alfonso cried to heaven for vengeance: and heaven has permitted its altar to be polluted by assassination, that thou mightest shed thy own blood at the foot of that prince's sepulcher."⁵⁹ No matter how attractive they may be in *human* terms, Theodore's virtues cannot act as a bulwark against divine retribution. Though he is crowned a prince, he is left among the ruins of Otranto castle, to brood over the dead body of Matilda, the innocent victim. Through this total destruction Walpole tries to evoke pity for undeserved suffering; the possibility of such a fall must surely have created an unsettling *frisson*, even for the blithely optimistic Augustans. Not only is the denouement one which shows providence acting quite out of accord with conventional "sentimental" morality (which assumes that the innocent will prevail and prosper), but it is also abrupt, and seemingly without any narrative symmetry. This is not quite melodrama (since the good and pure are, it seems, just as likely to meet a bad end as the wicked),

and yet it does not obey all the rules of Classical Tragedy either: if this be any sort of *anagnorisis*, then the only moral lesson to be drawn from it is that none are immune from the incomprehensible dictates of Providence.⁶⁰ This is hardly an enriching or ennobling sentiment, but then, despite his proclaimed veneration for the author, Walpole was no Shakespeare. The value of Walpole's writings resides less in any enlightenment they provide than in their ability to disturb and unsettle.

By defamiliarising (or desentimentalising) God and religion, Walpole both defines and defies accepted (or rationalised) patterns of belief. While the setting and characters are being defamiliarized, the reader is also made to appreciate the existence of an unknown dimension to life, one both vague and not susceptible to scientific investigation; one governed by codes and rules far stricter than the contingent power structures of human society. Here are found irrational concepts like God, death, religion, and the after life which had been ignored in the Augustan worldview, as well as the human conventions of love, marriage and family life (all conveyed starkly, in contrast to their Augustan sentimental reinterpretation). Geary opens an argument by asking "What we must now ask is this: if the religious consensus of the early to middle eighteenth century should weaken in the direction of further rationalism and secularization, why should not the supernatural vanish altogether from literature?"⁶¹ His descriptive term for this supernatural force is "numinous".⁶² The innate human aspiration towards awe must find expression, either through organised religion or through simple, idiosyncratic, mysticism. Secularization merely deprives this feeling of more sophisticated outlets. Hence, Walpole's depiction of the Deity and religion in *Otranto*, cut loose from a context of "rational" religious belief,

can only return in the most primitive form, that of demonic dread. If religious contemplation is directed towards *secondary* manifestations of the divine--that is, apparitions-- then the tension becomes purely disturbing and distressing. Superstitious dread also opens the door for the free play of medieval and eastern literary motifs, concerning the supernatural. A "particular Providence", which is inimical towards her creatures, mocks the eighteenth century rational conception of God and religion. Geary claims that "Jerome's deity is . . . more purely numinous, more Wholly Other, more purely terrifying than the usual rational, merciful, ethical deity of developed religion"⁶³ What keeps this "supernatural force" still alive in literature, then, is the anxious (and no less so for being heretical!) anticipation of this distorted version of the numinous, and as Geary puts it, "the Gothic [is] to be understood, then, as a return of the numinous in defiance of dominant cultural attitudes".⁶⁴

The ending of *Otranto* proves that the numinous is actually to be feared. It *prevents* the expression of natural individual aspirations. There is total destruction (albeit of a cathartic kind) at the end; Alfonso "the good" turns out to be baneful. It is suggested that the feared past may likewise return as a maleficent force. Walpole discovers in *Otranto* the nature of the historical, political, and *individual* illnesses of the age. The novel allegorically shows what the eighteenth century *is* through what it *is not* and through what it *could be* (a technique which Radcliffe was also to use). Walpole can thus safely hint at the blind spot of Augustan society: its unwillingness to confront the more irrational side of existence. Indeed, he can parody both the sterile dogmatism of the Augustan establishment (with its arrogant refusal to acknowledge any facet of human existence outside the narrow remits of practical advancement) *and* the

supine, passive acceptance of fate found among the lower orders (intransigent towards the established church of their age, stubbornly refusing to relinquish to it their old cherished superstitions, yet wholly unable to see their subservience to, or to make a stand against, the despotism of those very beliefs.) Through using almost all kinds of literary devices and different genres, Walpole creates a new perception, a new "enlightenment" as opposed to the Augustan Enlightenment and its "arid rationalism". However, the lack of any positive solution means that the novel cannot be of any use as an "improving" homiletic.

Following Walpole, the British gothicists (with the exception of Ann Radcliffe) also avoided didacticism in their works. Like Walpole, through amalgamation (or dissociation) of opposing worldviews, they brought to light the contemporary problems of their age: the Gothic genre stood as an allegory for the cultural *dividedness* of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One reason for their continuing appeal is their critique of any society which depends on a partly-discredited paradigm (whether that be a feudal, theocratic medieval *Weltanschauung* or the complacent "arid rationalism" of post-Enlightenment England). Gothic is also specific in its diagnosis of the adverse social and psychological effects of the clash between irreconcilable attitudes. Incest, rape, murder, schizophrenia, and all other perverse and transgressive passions are both symptoms of this division and metonyms for the chaotic moral, religious, political, and economic conditions of the age. However, perhaps a more important reason for gothicism's enduring fascination is a less academic one: the allure of the sensational and the speculative, and the curiously passive thrill for readers of immersing themselves in a world of threat and suspense conveyed most histrionically.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I.

¹ Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford: Oxford UP., 1982) 7.

² To Mme du Deffand, 13 Mar. 1767.

³ Huizinga 216.

⁴ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (New York: Routledge, 1996) 25.

⁵ This was possibly partly a reaction against Augustan principles of decorum which did not favour anything melancholy or self-indulgently piteous. J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 293.

⁶ Burke argues that "whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*. . . the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure". Burke 36.

⁷ The Augustan age in England was a peculiar mixture of scientific and mercantile dynamism, and complacent pride in its own modernity. Both Whigs and Tories, by this stage, were content to bask in reflections upon the *stability* and order of an England which had, with comparatively little bloodshed, survived both the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the arrival of the Hanoverian dynasty. Hence, *Otranto* reveals the dilemmas and conflicts of a society in transition. While abandoning old ways of life, society was trying to adapt itself to newly emerging forms. These conflicts, by extension, changed the normative structure of society; they challenged the definitions of previously established human propensities and modes of behavior, as reflected through sexuality, family, loyalty to one's "superiors", self-advancement and individual aspiration, and the nature of "revealed" religion.

⁸ Huizinga 216.

⁹ Huizinga 216.

¹⁰ It seems that an irrational, pre-Copernican *Weltanschauung*, suppressed by the proud, self-consciously modern and progressive eighteenth century mind, is waiting for the sleep of Rationalist Reason to give it a chance to erupt. Hence, medievalism in gothic fiction becomes the symbol of repressed fears. As Karl Jung says, "there are certain events of which we have not consciously taken note; they have remained, so to speak, below the threshold of consciousness. They have happened, but they have been absorbed subliminally, without our conscious knowledge . . . [Previous experience] later wells up from the unconscious as a sort of afterthought", (Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols* [London: Pan Books, 1978] 5.) and of course for Jung, (and indeed for Freud) what is true of individuals is also true of societies and of the whole human race. In the subconscious of society and of individuals, though repressed, old fears still exist. On the individual level these fears may take the form of nightmares. However, on the social level, they are revealed through folklore and literature. Thus the rise of Gothic fiction, in this respect, is an 'after thought', and suggests public dreaming that reveals these repressed, unknown fears. This cannot be interpreted merely as a love of the medieval world, but as a re-encounter with the old unconscious fears, and obsessions, of society.

¹¹ The very obscurity of a half-forgotten (or misinterpreted) past allows Walpole authorial license to introduce supernatural elements into the novel. As the Romantics were to do, he liberates both himself and his characters from the dogmatically rational, one-dimensional conventions of his age. His ambiguous authorial stance is very unlike his actual social status. Even if he is motivated predominantly by caprice, he makes full use of the freedom that fiction allows him to make a critique of both past and present impossible for him as a politician.

¹² Walpole 3.

¹³ C.S. Lewis argues that the attitude brought to bear by modern enthusiasts (however well-informed they may be) on medieval texts is always coloured by the cultural assumptions of a later period: "a modern finds those of the Dark Ages suspiciously epic and those of the High Middle Ages suspiciously romantic" He claims that on account of the gaps in knowledge--and the fundamentally ahistorical attitude-- in the Middle Ages, the medieval authors "pictured the whole past in terms of their own age", (C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP., 1994] 182.) while *modern* authors attempt, with historicist zeal, verisimilitude: fidelity to the long-vanished mores of "another country" where people "do things differently".

¹⁴Such escapism is today still a part of much hack writing in the genres which Umberto Eco claims use "The Middle Ages as a *pretext*", or "as the site of an ironical revisitation". He also notes the crudity of celebrations of the Medieval "as a *barbaric* age, a land of elementary and outlaw feelings . . . (where) one is asked to celebrate, on this earth of virile, brute force, the glories of a new Aryanism", and finally notes that "The Middle Ages of *Romanticism*, with their stormy castles and ghosts . . . germane to the eastern cruelty of *Vathek*, . . . return in some contemporary space operas". Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (London: Picador, 1987) 68-69.

¹⁵ Baldick xiii.

¹⁶ N. Daniel provides a happy counter-argument to Gibbon's notion of the Middle Ages merely as interruption in the progression from Augustan Rome to Augustan England: "As C.S. Lewis so well argued in his inaugural lecture, *De Descriptio Temporum*, the real close of the Middle Ages comes somewhere in the industrial age, with the new "assumption that everything is provisional and soon to be superceded". It is legitimate to set the Modern Age at least no earlier than the French Revolution." Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* (Harlow: Longman, 1975) 1.

¹⁷ Only with William Morris and the Pre- Raphaelites did it become so.

¹⁸ "Islam was assessed as the 'sum of heresies' . . . this helped Europe to feel cosy, and well protected from the cold draught of outside error". Daniel 325.

¹⁹ See Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: a Forgotten Heritage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987) 4-5.

²⁰ Walpole 15.

²¹ The penetration of Eastern motifs into European culture dates back to the Middle Ages themselves, when Islamic tales passed through Arabised Sicily and Moorish Spain in the wake of commerce or crusade. This in itself hardly constitutes syncretism, but rather a confused borrowing of garbled and misinterpreted motifs--much like the Gothic genre itself in its least successful moments. As N. Daniel points out, the Medieval period is no less complex and

inconsistent than the Neomedievalism of the gothicists: "Of the Middle Ages we must say that it was at one and the same time a period of parallel development, a period of preponderance of Arabic culture, and a period of mutual devastation, with psychological results reaching forward into the imperialist age and into our own times". Daniel 329.

²² Botting claims that "Translations of Arabian stories led to a vogue for Oriental tales and a love of the exotic. The East constituted another space in which the expanding imagination could freely roam." (Botting 59.) Even in *Mysteries of Udolpho*, where the hint of the uncanny is eventually explained away rationally, Radcliffe was to show her own interest in Eastern tales through a scholarly comment: "The fiction of provencal writers . . . drawn from the Arabian legends brought by the Saracens into Spain . . . recounts the chivalric exploits performed by the crusades" Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 2 Vols. (London: Everyman's Library, 1965) 2: 222.

²³ Peter L. Caracciolo's research in *The Arabian Nights in English Literature* shows the popularity of Eastern stories in England in the eighteenth century: "The tales were not confined to the leisure hours of pupils studying Greek and Latin. Following the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* in regular installments, the *Churchman's Last Shift* began weekly serialization of 'Sinbad the Sailor' in 1720-and, later, of another series of extracts from the *Nights* . . . in 1723 the *London News*, a thrice weekly news-sheet, began serializing *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*. Its 445 installments ran over three years." Peter L. Caracciolo, *The Arabian Nights in English Literature* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1988) 2.

²⁴ The Monster's problematic status will of course be discussed later, but in the context of this chapter's analysis of Gothic borrowing from fairy tales, it is worth pointing out that he is both Ariel and Caliban, genie and golem.

²⁵ See Menocal 22. In accordance with the cultural (or folkloric) implications of the characters and the setting, Walpole presents both the Christian notion of the fall, and the Islamic concept of kismet. Although Manfred's fall stems from his egotistic hubris (or pride), the ancient prophecy announces that it is also his immutable destiny. Walpole's idle toying with the notion of *fate* and *providence*, through motifs which are not even Christian, but pagan or eastern, implies his lack of total commitment to positivistic doctrines of self-made rise and fortune.

²⁶ Walpole 15-16.

²⁷ Walpole 17.

²⁸ Walpole 33.

²⁹ Walpole 62.

³⁰ Walpole 100.

³¹ Keith Thomas provides plenty of examples of such prophecies, many of them as cryptic and apocalyptic as *Otranto's* own: "for sixteenth-century Englishmen the existing political order was not regarded as a matter of mere practical convenience, challengeable at will. It was divinely ordained, and God's sanctions would fall upon the rebel wicked enough to challenge it. When a man embarked upon the drastic course of insurrection he was flouting all the moral teaching of the day and cutting himself loose from the whole social and political order in which he had been nurtured. At such times prophecy made its appeal by providing a sanction for such dramatic action. Ideally the prophecy was a divine one indicating that rebellious activity was in accordance with God's will. . . ." Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) 503.

³² Such uncertainty is not only "sublime", in Burke's words, but an example of the "uncanny" as analysed by Freud as a literary critic. See Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny", *Art and Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988) *passim*.

³³ Walpole 5.

³⁴ See Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale UP., 1970) 142-145. Becker points out that after the French Revolution posterity replaced the idea of the afterlife. Augustan certainty had had the unforeseen result of making life *less* certain: the spirituality (and indeed mysticism) which had supported ordinary people and given their lives meaning up to the Reformation was being expunged from their lives, leaving them to make sense of a mechanistic universe. If there was a reduced sense of responsibility towards

God, then an awareness of the way that human actions could reverberate down the generations might take its place.

³⁵ The Godhead, never directly revealed in *Otranto*, is not a transcendent "Prime Mover" (as the semi-atheist rationalists and British empiricists saw it), but immanent (although hardly in a Rousseau-esque sense). In fact, its appearance *perplexes* as often as it consoles. As Eco wittily puts it, "The universe of the early Middle Ages was a universe of hallucinations, the world was a symbolic forest peopled with mysterious presences; things were seen as if in the continuous story of a divinity who spent his time reading and devising the *Weekly Puzzle Magazine*". Eco 261.

³⁶ Manfred in this respect is depicted as a greater villain than his grandfather. When he seizes Isabella by force, the picture of his grandfather, the usurper who poisoned Alfonso, sighs and quits its panel with a grave and melancholy air. (Walpole 23.) This apparition which is endowed with life and the power of stepping down from its frame is a restless soul. He seems to have regretted what he has done, and this is, in a sense, an implication that the ancient prophecy will be accomplished: Manfred is aware that he is going against the authority of providence, the authority to which even his grandfather, the fiendish character, is subject. Though Manfred does not expect any help from heaven, neither can he rely on encouragement from Hell.

³⁷ Walpole 8.

³⁸ Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956) 61.

³⁹ Walpole 30.

⁴⁰ Walpole 24.

⁴¹ Walpole 54.

⁴² Stevenson sees Manfred's enterprise as an assertion of his own dynasty and his own line against that of Alfonso. Stevenson declares that "the kings die but the kingship never does" (Stevenson 96): a ghostly body politic endures. He does not pay any attention to the idea of the

individual act of assertion of the prince; however, this interpretation gives us some clues about the core of the conflict between Manfred and Alfonso. Alfonso's line is royal and in the social scale, superior to the line of Manfred. Manfred's attempt to replace the royal line of Alfonso with his own, in a sense, is a threat to the feudal (and divinely appointed) order. Manfred thus sets an interestingly anachronistic fictional precedent for refusals to allow religious, political or moral freedom to be subordinated to any feudal or theocratic power. Here he stands; he can do no other.

⁴³ Walpole 47.

⁴⁴ A fact which seems to have troubled him as little as marriage to his brother's widow troubled that *historical* English rebel prince, Henry VIII, until a more suitable bride presented herself.

⁴⁵ Terry Heller claims that "one of our unique capacities as human beings is to construct a self conscious identity, an 'I' ". As human beings we try to achieve identities, and we "continue to specify those identities by asserting and maintaining self-consciousness, by making choices to be one person and not another". (Terry Heller, *The Delights of Terror* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987] 194-195.) The desire to be different from others in order to achieve a "self", a "personality", can lead the individual to entertain images of the forbidden, images of what culture commands its members to exclude from their selves. Manfred, in this sense, is trying to achieve a personality by entertaining images of the forbidden. By going against the warnings of father Jerome, he refuses to allow his personality to be stamped by the dictates of providence.

⁴⁶ M. H. Abrams, (ed.) *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 4th ed. (New York: Norton, 1979) 1708.

⁴⁷ Thus he comes close to the Hobbesian concept of a usurper, or indeed a solitary exponent of Locke's theories regarding the *legitimacy* of rebellion.

⁴⁸ See John Morrill, "The Stuarts", *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*, ed. Kenneth Morgan (Oxford: Oxford UP., 1992) 387-393. This is of course another folktale motif, and the theme of the incognito prince in exile also recalls genuine Anglo-Norman romances such as "Havelock the Dane" -- but, more intriguingly, it also encapsulates the hopes and pride of

Englishmen regarding the relative "upward mobility" of their society (the envy of many Continental freethinkers, including Voltaire). "A succession of French visitors . . . testified in print to the lack of 'caste' in this country, and especially to the ease with which individuals could move up and down the social ladder." Morrill, in Morgan 387 ff.

⁴⁹ Walpole 51.

⁵⁰ Walpole 90-91.

⁵¹ Walpole 91.

⁵² Walpole 54.

⁵³ Walpole 62.

⁵⁴ Walpole 92.

⁵⁵ Matthew G. Lewis, *The Monk* (New York: Oxford UP., 1981) 237.

⁵⁶ Walpole 102.

⁵⁷ Robert F. Geary, *The Supernatural in Gothic Fiction* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992) 28.

⁵⁸ Walpole 108.

⁵⁹ Walpole 105.

⁶⁰ Geary admits to disappointment with this ending. For Geary "one would expect poetic justice as emblematic of an ultimate divine order behind the disorder of the world". Geary 28.

⁶¹ Geary 18.

⁶² He borrows this term from Rudolf Otto's analysis of the numinous in his *The Idea of the Holy*. Geary comments on Otto's work, saying "Otto proposed that the root of religious emotion is a sense of "creature feeling" of absolute submergence of the self", (Geary 18.) and this, for Otto, is the "numinous" itself.

⁶³ Geary 29.

⁶⁴ Geary 18.

CHAPTER II

A Woman's Place: the Civilising Influence of the Powerless

The Gothic novel reached its first peak, regarding quantity and popularity, in the mid-1790's in the works of a *woman*,¹ Ann Radcliffe, who in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, brought the Gothic machinery of Walpole to perfection, at the same time giving the genre a Neoclassical underpinning. When *Udolpho* was published, she was thirty, married to a prosperous lawyer who was also the editor of a literary magazine. She appears to have spent most of her time at their home in Bath. Little is known about her life except that it seems to have been secure and uneventful. She appears to have been personally shy and fond of privacy, preferring to avoid the literary world of her age.

Despite the obscurity of her life, from her work alone may be discerned many topical anxieties pertaining to the eighteenth century--such as uncertainty or controversy over the nature and role of family, marriage, and the social hierarchy.² Drawing on the major issues of her time, she illustrates, more overtly than Walpole, the confusions of a society in transition in which the moral codes dealing with such issues are being redefined. Her novel not only analyses the nature of these anxieties but shows how they originate. She possesses greater conviction than her more amoral predecessors: she clearly distinguishes good conduct from evil, reason from passion, and virtue from vice. Furthermore, unlike Walpole and indeed later gothicists, Radcliffe offers a solution to the conflicts of the age. The world she depicts as sincerely (and virtuously) bound to sentimental moral codes *is* indicted, but only for its passivity, which threatens to

leave it prey to less civilised forces. The novel sustains a decorous and didactic balance of excitement and instruction.

Like Walpole, Radcliffe deals with social and individual issues indirectly through now traditional Gothic devices, but she refines and develops the cruder elements of *Otranto*. While maintaining its dark atmosphere, she presents it in a less mannered, less ludic and self-conscious way. This realism, paradoxically, facilitates a return to a more traditional (or Neoclassical) aesthetic. However, she makes her own, less anthropocentric, contributions to the Gothic machinery laid down by Walpole. The first striking difference is *Udolpho's* richness of geographical setting. She introduces not only isolated and ruined old chateaux, but also dark forests, and spectacular mountains. The scene is moved from the pastoral idyll in France to remote mountain tops, thence to the gorgeous city of Venice, later to the isolated castle of Udolpho, located among the mountains, and finally back to France. Radcliffe's choice of such settings is not arbitrary. They are again southern European Catholic countries, complete with their "feudal" structures which furnish Augustan England with its negative, irrational counterpart. Yet Radcliffe brings her setting closer to modernity by locating her story in the Renaissance period, while still continuing the Gothic association of Catholicism with superstition, masculine power, and passionate extremes. In addition, she acknowledges a *gradation* of barbarism by introducing a variety of settings, in which she moves from the civilised to the dystopian, and thus creates an opposition between order and anarchy. She sets her story in Renaissance France and Italy, in 1584, but makes it plain that these settings differ from each other. France, despite the existence of a sinister undercurrent, is depicted as a more civilised, more harmonious country, whereas Italy is the extreme example of

discord: almost all the Italian characters are described as passionate and, hence, villainous and transgressive. The settings do not represent sixteenth century "humanism"³ any more than they do a continuation of the medieval feudal and scholastic tradition. Most of the characters are Machiavellian.⁴ Montoni, and his friends Cavigni, Bertolini, Orsino, Verezzi, and M. Quesnel and the bandits who invade the wilderness are hardly in harmony with the popular image of a cultured Renaissance society (an image which Radcliffe *does* evoke, but not very consistently). The Catholic societies she describes seem to foreshadow the eighteenth century's unrestricted capitalistic expansion. The great cities are described as places "where selfishness, dissipation, and insincerity supply the place of tenderness, simplicity, and truth".⁵ On the other hand, the good characters, exceptionally virtuous and fragile, are equally incongruous in their setting. They are again described in terms which reflect not the social and cultural traditions of Italy and France, but the sentimental world of England. Both the villainous "bandits"⁶ and the sentimentally virtuous characters display a moral relativism reminiscent of cynical or sceptical undercurrents in Radcliffe's own age. Hence, the world she creates is neither truly civilised, nor completely primitive: it is amorphously Gothic, including all kinds of potentialities in itself. In this setting, she reiterates the anxieties concerning contemporary moral dilemmas which had already been presented in *Otranto*.

Radcliffe, like Walpole, makes both the settings and the characters strangely familiar to English eyes. She attributes sentimental English characteristics to good characters like St. Aubert, Emily, Valancourt, and to some nobles like M. Du Pont, and Count de Villefort. Conversely, the ambitious and villainous characters, who have associations with Italy rather than France, are also

symbols of another type common in English society, and frequently indicted in Gothic novels: they reflect the worldly drives of a newly arisen bourgeoisie and the "laissez-faire" nature of their moral bearing. The self-aggrandizing drives of the Italian villains like Montoni, Orsino, Verezzi, Cavigni, and their French counterparts, Madame Cheron and Monsieur Quesnel, suggest not sixteenth century society but eighteenth century England and its "progressive" attitudes. Both countries are used as mirrors to reflect English attitudes. France (England's Norman progenitor) is what England once was; Italy, what it might have the misfortune to become.

Radcliffe does not offer the reader consolation or reassurance that the threat of untamed emotion (and its concomitant descent into barbarism) can be kept in check, or at bay, by any external answer, which, in Walpole, is provided by a "deus ex machina". Rather, she suggests an internal and "moral" solution through depicting a model (yet anodyne and unengaging) individual, Emily St. Aubert, whom authorial license "protects" from beginning to end. To facilitate expression of such optimism, Radcliffe brings the Gothic closer to sentimental (or Augustan) standards of literary taste. Indeed, she remains half devoted to the official literary conventions of propriety while being seduced by the fantastic world of Gothic fiction. She is, in her attitude, more conservative than Walpole or later writers: her characters might easily have been plucked from the sentimental genre of fiction. This conservatism *softens* (or feminizes) the martial (or destructive) masculine tone of Gothic fiction. Not only are the heroes and heroines of *Udolpho* made more feminine: the villains, too, "benefit" from Radcliffe's sentimentalising touches. They do not commit violent crimes, (although there is always the possibility, frequently suggested by the author, of

such sociopathic actions); more significantly, the anti-hero, Montoni is considerably less ruthless than other Gothic malcontents. The villains, in fact, play a very small and generally ineffectual part in the narrative. The world is not presented to the reader through the eyes of such perverse reprobates (as it is in *The Monk*, where Ambrosio's interpretation of the world is given priority, or in the multiple narratives of *Melmoth* and *Frankenstein*, where the more corrupt characters are given a narrative voice equal to that of the more sentimental protagonists) but almost entirely through those of the sentimental characters (especially Emily). This emphasis on the sentimental further integrates the novel into the world of "reality" because, without such a sentimental counterpart and target, *Udolpho* would lack any *raison d'être*, and become a merely escapist form of vicarious entertainment: an unsupported "epiphenomenon" of Augustan society's least cultured side, rather than a contribution to it. Only by a direct portrayal of the sentimental world could Gothic even approximate towards any didactic status.

Radcliffe creates two myths in her novel, which can be defined through the metaphors of "feminine" and "masculine". This opposition signifies not merely a difference of gender, but two entirely distinct *modi vivendi* and perspectives. The two different genres of romance and tragedy used as devices in Gothic literature in general, in fact, reflect the two different worldviews: romance is the genre of sentimental (feminine) culture, and tragedy is used to depict entirely masculine drives and their morbid consequences. The two worldviews can also be seen as expressions of the Apollonian and Dionysian respectively--the "feminine" offers security and order (albeit of a rather bland kind, and one vulnerable to attack). Masculinity is a threat: Radcliffe addresses the common middle class

presumption of the age, that males were the "natural moral inferior[s]"⁷ of the female. In *Udolpho*, femininity is more than a mere repository of fears, dramatically exploited for ends of suspense. Whereas in the works of male Gothic authors, female characters and their predicaments evoke only the passivity and victimisation of the one sex by the other⁸ in a threatening masculine world, or even represent an "other", a deviation from the patriarchal norm, here femininity is presented as a way of engaging with the world, to be taken on its own merits.⁹ Conversely, the function of masculine power in the novel is limited to creating a threat to feminine values. Radcliffe sees such masculinity, unchecked by civilising influences, as brute power exercised without responsibility. The violent assertion of masculine power, always more likely to occur outside the palliative normative strictures of civilised society, is explicitly linked to both barbarism and the possibility of even more irrational *supernatural* threats. Although the novel opens in the civilised milieu of France and Italy, a descent into uncertainty and terror soon occurs, when the characters are carried away from urban life. Hence, in Radcliffe's depiction, masculinity, if unchecked by the norms of civilisation, becomes menacing in its wildness, a corrupting force in the feminine world. Meanwhile, she makes a critique of the civilised world itself for its passivity and foolish sensibility in the face of such masculine violence.

As violence is made less overt, less central, to the novel Radcliffe also tones down another undidactic Gothic motif: the pure supernatural note found in *Otranto*. There are, in fact, no ghosts in *Udolpho* (except in a sub narrative) and no numinous existences hostile or benevolent to human characters. The supernatural is reduced to a technical device for maintaining suspense, and as such, is successfully used by Radcliffe to evoke a very domestic, even bathetic,

"sublime".¹⁰ The source of awe lies--as the end of the narrative reveals--in a very worldly milieu. Hence, Radcliffe replaces the supernatural monstrosity of *Otranto* with the corrupt psychology of all too human villains, and balances the one sided (masculine) tone of *Otranto* by drawing her "good" characters from the sentimental genre of fiction in which fine feelings are signs of virtue and nobility. This makes *Udolpho* a light (but still effective) critique of the sentimental culture and its ineffectual, self-deceiving, and timorous sides. Furthermore, since Radcliffe is concerned to offer a solution, the novel is built more on romance (the genre that depicts success and salvation) than on tragedy (which emphasises failure and condemnation).

The Mysteries of Udolpho tells the story of Emily St Aubert. Brought up in a rural chateau in southern France by a caring father, Emily is educated in the virtues of simplicity and domestic harmony. She is prone, however, to overindulge her sensibilities. Her father, before he dies, warns her that all excess is vicious, especially excessive sensibility. Taken in by her aunt, (Madame Cheron) Emily embarks upon an abortive romance with Valancourt, a similarly sentimental young nobleman. This false start towards independence having failed, Emily is removed from her familiar milieu only when her aunt marries the Marquis Montoni and takes her to Venice and then to the castle of Udolpho. Montoni is the dark villain of the story who tries, by menacing and murderous means, to secure Emily's estates. She flees from his persecution and the imagined terrors of the castle by way of the mouldering vaults of a ruined Gothic chapel. Later, supposedly supernatural terrors are explained prosaically, as is the entirely human identity of Montoni: he is leader of a group of banditti, not a demon.

Emily returns to France and to the security of an aristocratic family, the Villeforts, who live in the region in which she was born. Despite the return to the simplicity of country life, fears of ghostly machinations continue to propel the narrative, until an exhaustive series of explanations unravels both the mysteries of the castle and the disturbing secrets of the family. With the return of Valancourt, absent from most of the narrative as a result of falling prey to the charms of a countess and the corruptions of society, domestic happiness is restored. The novel concludes on a note of melodrama: its ostensible moral is that the power of vice is as temporary as its punishment is certain. Innocence, supported by patience, is held always to triumph at the last.

Such reassurance, however, does not come until the end of the novel. Emily certainly experiences enough personal danger to satisfy most readers' thirst for excitement. The sustained note of fatalistic dread in *Otranto* is replaced, in *Udolpho*, by gradually built up tension through Radcliffe's successful management of suspense. The settings are one source of vacillation and insecurity. By frequently changing the setting and moving from the less despised France to the most abhorred Italy, she makes both her characters and readers expect threats and attacks. In France, the initial setting of the novel, the threats are too remote to impinge upon the lives of the characters. Although the existence of something sinister is acknowledged--the pencilled sonnet Emily sees in the fishing house, the music that comes from the forest, the presence of ambitious characters like Monsieur Quesnel and Madame Cheron, and the bandits disguised as hunters--the good characters are, in their rural idyll, relatively safe from danger. However, with the shift to Italy (the second Catholic country to be used as a setting, and indeed the epitome of Papal control) the supposed threats

are actualised. There, previously undefined fears are rendered more immediate. Even the description of the countryside suggests a savage, brutal "masculine" kind of beauty, with nothing soft or welcoming about it. When Emily

descended on the Italian side, the precipices became still *more* tremendous, the prospects still *more* wild and majestic . . . She looked with horror upon the mountaineers perched on the higher cliffs, assailing the troops below with broken fragments of the mountain; on soldiers and elephants tumbling headlong down the lower precipices: and as she listened to the rebounding rocks that followed their fall, the terrors of fancy yielded to those of reality (emphasis mine)¹¹

It is a country divided against itself, plagued by malcontent feudal lords fighting for estate and money. As Emily observes, "Over the beautiful plains of this country the devastations of war were frequently visible".¹² Though the city of Venice is portrayed as gay--the center of all sophisticated conduct--this picture is deceptive. In Italy danger acquires proximity and immediacy:¹³ Emily is held prisoner, her aunt is starved to death, Emily's estates are usurped, and she is in danger of being raped. The novel, in fact, shows that beneath the polished, supposedly "civilised", exterior of society lie untamed human desires. The bandits of Udolpho are not, after all, primitive people: they seem to be animated by the very passions which largely define their society, such as wealth and worldly power. Their descent into grotesqueness, however, comes with their overt expression of such concealed passions in impermissible ways.

It is not only the settings but the characters who are defamiliarised through the discrepancy between their *real* national identity and gender roles and the

characteristics assigned to them. From the start Monsieur St. Aubert and Emily are made "English" in behavior and worldview. Like an exemplary middle class mother, responsible for the education of her children in eighteenth century England,¹⁴ St. Aubert cultivates his daughter by inculcating in her, often through literature, moral values: he

cultivated her understanding with the most scrupulous care. He gave her a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English . . . A well informed mind, he would say, is the best security against the contagion of folly and vice . . . Thought and cultivation are necessary equally to the happiness of a country and city life.¹⁵

The ultimately ineffectual St. Aubert is, in some ways, a mouthpiece for Radcliffe's own notion of propriety: it is through him that the reader grasps the theme of the novel.

However, he *is* a caricature, and through him, Radcliffe also depicts the weakness and vulnerability of a sentimental worldview. A divided personality, he talks like a rationalist, but acts like a romantic. Although he advises his daughter that excessive sensibility is dangerous, he himself is invariably gloomy, hypersensitive, and quite as tender as his wife. Far too vulnerable to the slightest melancholy, he "often wept and sobbed aloud".¹⁶ Emily herself sees her father crying when he is alone and kissing the picture of a lady (actually his late sister). Devoted to the past, he is unable to live in the present.¹⁷ His mood shifts between reason and sensibility, which makes him more susceptible to the ills and hardships of the world. He is also physically feeble; he dies on the way to Paris. Through the character of St. Aubert Radcliffe indicts the more vulnerable side of the

sentimental culture: although not grotesque, St. Aubert exhibits his own "feminine" form of excess, the etiolated, enervated opposite of the excessive villainy that the perverse "masculine" characters show.

While St. Aubert himself dies before he can experience city life and its ills, Emily is, through no positive wish of her own, thrown into worldly society. Her sentimental education has made her, paradoxically, a most *unfeminine* paragon of logic and self-control: she is hardly an example of that female susceptibility to hysteria in which the Augustans believed. Botting argues that sentimental heroines "have a tendency . . . to overindulge their emotions, partaking too heavily of the cult of sensibility which flowered in the eighteenth century. Rarefied abandonments to feeling leave heroes and heroines in tears at the slightest melancholy thought and fainting at the smallest shock".¹⁸ Radcliffe evidently notes this deficiency in the sentimental world itself, and therefore creates a rather implausible heroine whose devotion to sentimental values helps, rather than hinders, her in her struggle against masculine authority: despite lacking the worldliness necessary to combat the villainy both of the voluptuous society of Italy, and of Montoni, she, at least, does not fall victim to the world's corruption. Though at first exemplifying naivete and feebleness, she finally, Radcliffe would have the reader believe, gains experience and resolution after successfully combating temptation and villainy.

In fact, Emily's essential character does not change, or mature greatly throughout. Despite all Radcliffe's authorial protection and sympathy, Emily lacks the individualism necessary for a modern reader to see her as a dynamic character. She simply puts into practice what she has learnt from her father, becoming a more *successful* sentimentalist, rather than approximating towards an unbiased

nonconformism, or even a fully autonomous personality.¹⁹ Her decisions are automatic, determined by the cultural attitudes she has absorbed, rather than reached through dialectic. An emblem of Englishness, representing Protestant rationalism, her conduct is markedly distinguished from that of her Catholic servants, Annette and Dorotee, who represent Catholic superstition. By contrasting Emily with these settings and characters, Radcliffe defines good English attitudes: self-conscious and dutiful, she displays *sangfroid* and the total self-control which the other characters lack. What she fears most is not ghosts as such but *appearing* superstitious and hysterical (or "womanish"!) in the face of them. Keeping her own sentimental values, she learns how to avoid that oversensibility which her father could not help indulging. Furthermore, like a masculine romance hero, she tries to secure her property from Montoni in order to aid her lover Valancourt, and teaches him the value of good conduct. Radcliffe appears to want this to symbolise Emily's great success in achieving synthesis and balance, reconciling masculine and feminine (without approximating to androgyny!). However, it could be read only as the repressed wish-fulfilment of the author herself, eager to imagine women succeeding in a masculine world in fact closed to them. If the reading is ungenerous (or unchivalrous!) it would go some way towards explaining why Emily herself often seems as much of a dramatic pawn as the other characters.

Emily and her family are not the only domesticated (and anodyne) paragons of whiggish, priggish virtue. Civilised society is full of complacent, shabby genteel milksops. Though Radcliffe fails to convince the reader of Emily's dynamism, she succeeds in depicting Valancourt as the most comic (or feminised) character (after St. Aubert). His personality is a caricature of the

passive sentimental type from the eighteenth century. Despite his nobility, generousness, and knightly conduct--he helps the needy and the weak--Valancourt is a naif, lacking both the intellectual apparatus and the wherewithal to assert himself or show any kind of resolve. He remains passive and credulous from beginning to end. It is on account of his compliance and submission that Emily is taken to Italy in the first place. His entrapment by a "well known Parisian countess"²⁰ --though Radcliffe never gives a full account of what happened--is an indication of his liability to corruption. He is absent in the crucial moments of the novel. He never fights: he cannot protect his beloved from Montoni's wrath. Even count Villefort defines Valancourt as having "neither the power nor the inclination to extricate himself"²¹ and blames him since "his morals are corrupted"²² This makes him a yet more vulnerable "feminine" hero: his personality, like that of the well known Parisian countess, has become notorious in the sentimental world. Elegant people avoid seeing him, or being seen with him.

Radcliffe moves St. Aubert (and his wife) quickly from the scene, because their continuing presence would further muddy the demarcation of gender roles (including quasi-parental functions) which informs much of the novel. She turns her attention to Montoni (and to a lesser extent, Madame Cheron) to lampoon the institution of the family, and the way in which responsibilities are abnegated. Such duties are almost invariably *paternalistic* (oddly, in such a feminised contribution to Gothic, little attention is paid to motherhood), and therefore belong in the male domain. Through the character of Montoni (and again to a lesser extent Madame Cheron), Radcliffe suggests the changing (or economically redefined) roles of individuals in the domestic life of the eighteenth century. The

corruption and distortion endemic in such institutions as marriage and the family are the results of materialism: the marriage of Montoni and Madame Cheron is loveless, made for money and estate. It seems that materialism has permeated these institutions held "sacrosanct".

Money is everything in the society Radcliffe describes: its norms are determined by economic relations, and, like *Otranto*, *Udolpho*'s main theme is misappropriation. Usurpation of property is achieved in two ways. M. Quesnel's own seizing of the estates of St. Aubert is actually legitimate, and is more of a "hostile take-over" than an usurpation proper. His selfishness and self-importance have been given both recognition and legitimate avenues for expression in the sentimental world. On the other hand, illegitimate usurpation is engineered by Montoni, who keeps Emily in Udolpho castle to take possession of her estates. Since *Udolpho* connects this kind of ruthless pragmatism with aggression and masculinity, such politics take a distinctly misogynist turn.

The more violent side of masculinity, as seen by the more sentimental characters (and, one may infer, by Radcliffe herself) is represented by Montoni and his bandits, symbols of the untamed masculine power's threat to the sentimental world. Of the bandits, Montoni is the most interesting. If Italy represents the extreme depths of depravity to which England could yet fall, the character of Montoni represents the degeneracy of which the materialist individual from the eighteenth century is capable. However, he is not merely a stock villain or symbol, but a fully developed character. If compared to sentimental figures like St. Aubert, Emily, and Valancourt, he is a malignant force, but not wholly or always so. He assumes different social roles but all of them represent masculine power: a husband, through his marriage to Cheron; a

father, to Emily after her own father's death; a friend, to the bandits in Udolpho castle; a lover, when he fights Morano. He has strength, loyalty and courage; he is ruthless, but not psychotic. He is more of a *rogue* than an irredeemable villain, yet unfeeling and irresponsible; galvanised only by the idea of "upward mobility". He, therefore, uses every possible means to achieve his goals. Although his desire for power and autonomy reminds the reader of the patriarch *manque* Manfred, he combines this with a frankly sexual attractiveness; he is also an early forerunner of the Byronic hero: "This Signor Montoni had an air of conscious superiority, animated by spirit and strengthened by talents, to which every person seemed involuntarily to yield . . . Emily felt admiration, but not the admiration that leads to esteem; for it was mixed with a degree of fear she knew not exactly wherefore".²³ Manfred is rejected by Isabella, but Montoni, for all his villainy, is still an attractive figure to Emily. Interestingly, this attraction is regarded as an entirely understandable "elective affinity" by the other characters in the novel (and perhaps by Radcliffe herself). Even Emily's would-be suitor, Lord Morano, a Venetian noble, suspects that she is in love with Montoni. Indeed, in total contradiction to everything else Radcliffe would have the reader believe of Emily, the supposedly independent and self-possessed heroine willingly throws herself under his protection. Emily's lack of character and passivity give Montoni an opportunity to assert his masculinity, or his paternalism: Radcliffe's making Montoni a father figure to Emily suggests a more tortuous side to familial relations than was acknowledged in the Augustan age. In fact, her real father, St. Aubert, is no more than a "mother" to Emily: he has little authority over, or sanction against his daughter. Montoni, on the other hand, is a better bourgeois "father" figure: he tells Emily what to do; he advises her on her choice of

husband.²⁴ Even when he orders his associates Bertolini and Verezzi to terrorise Emily,²⁵ she returns to him, the least suitable of guardians, for protection.

Despite his charisma and good qualities, Montoni is adjudged a villain by the passive sentimental world, and its materialistic (or in Emily's case, *romantic*) values. The ineffectual sentimental characters are ashamed of their desires and condemn them in others. They either repress their passions, or express them only in "respectable" ways. Montoni is attractive precisely because he does not conceal his ambitions: innocent of hypocrisy, he expresses himself straightforwardly. Since he lacks the "civilised" feelings of shame and self-reproach, he carries his masculine urges to extremes: he deviates from the social roles of both husband and father. Underneath a pragmatic respect and desire for the symbols of power and material wealth, lies a contempt for "civilised" values. Such disregard for the respectable conventions of society leads him to decide to gain all its "baubles" through force.²⁶ Herein lies his villainy: a betrayal of his family responsibilities for economic reasons, or for reasons of "upward mobility". However, Radcliffe does not damn Montoni outright (as Lewis and Maturin were to do from a more theological viewpoint with their villains): she judges Montoni as a being capable of civilised behavior, and therefore to be indicted when he fails to follow society's rules. Thus, if there is any *philosophical* resonance behind Radcliffe's psychological critique, it recalls Locke (and Hume) and the idea of man as *tabula rasa*, or Hobbes and his view of civilisation--certainly not the trust in human goodness that Rousseau expounded. In the novel, a major part of masculine psychology is greed for worldly power, and it is true that sentimental society provokes this desire in the villains. However, society's conventions also offer an

opportunity for *self-correction*, which the villains do not take. They eventually perish--yet Radcliffe is hardly sympathetic to their "plight".

After Emily escapes from Udolpho castle, she takes refuge in Count de Villefort's mansion in France. The real threats of the previous setting are once again replaced by imagined (or distanced) terrors. Count de Villefort is "the nobleman who succeeded to an estate of the Marquis de Villeroi"²⁷ and Emily finds herself privy to the family secret. She later learns that Marchioness Villeroi was her unfortunate aunt, poisoned by her husband: yet another indication of the tensions present within matrimonial relations, but perhaps one rendered less shocking by its fairy tale resonance.²⁸ The mystery of the Marchioness's death provokes fears of the uncanny. Her belongings are still kept untouched in a separate room whose door has not been opened for twenty years, and which is rumored to be haunted. The outrageous implausibility of this latest, apparently gratuitous plot twist enables Radcliffe to incorporate Gothic themes of the supernatural into what has hitherto been a conventional melodrama. She even introduces fairy tale motifs to deepen the secret of this "haunted chamber". In fact, such superstitions are accorded a place much earlier in the novel, and are not discredited until much later.²⁹ The "numinous" in the novel is suggested through the "veiled image", which Emily, while looking for her aunt, discovers in a spacious room in Udolpho castle:

. . . she seized it [the veil] in a fit of desperation, and drew it aside. Beyond appeared a corpse stretched on a kind of low couch, which was crimsoned with human blood, as was the floor beneath. The features, deformed by death, were ghastly and horrible, and more than one livid wound appeared in the face. Emily, bending over the

body, gazed, for a moment, with an eager, frenzied eye; but in the next, the lamp dropped from her hand, and she fell senseless at the foot of the couch.³⁰

The suspense arising from this "corpse", far from being immediately resolved, is indeed not even referred to till the novel's end. The reader has to wait for hundreds of pages to learn that it was, in fact, a waxen effigy:

Emily, it may be recalled, had, after the first glance, let the veil drop, and her terror had prevented her from ever after provoking a renewal of such suffering as she had then experienced. Had she dared to look again, her delusions and her fears would have vanished together, and she would have perceived that the figure before her was not human, but framed of wax.³¹

Radcliffe's application of "bathos" to the numinous--after all, the mystery *is* brought to light--reassures the reader that "reality", though hidden behind a veil, can finally be apprehended. Extolling the clarity of the Protestant worldview, she discredits Catholic superstition, emphasising that it is only the weakness of human psychology (or discord between "masculine" and "feminine" interpretations of the world) that leads to fear of the supernatural. Oddly, such fears are not only unsettling, but *paradoxically comforting* in that they provide a rationalisation of the unexplained, to the untrained, or credulous, mind. It is easier to believe in the irrational than to find a more prosaic explanation. For Radcliffe it is human nature which veils reality, distorts it, and gives it monstrous proportions. The waxen image was created by the superstitious Marquis of Udolpho, since he had "offended the prerogative of the Church"³² and was thus condemned to the penance of contemplating that image during certain hours of the day: a reminder

of the fate to which he too must accede. Thus, the Marquis, in his lifetime, created his own monster (or Doppelgänger). Initially, however, Emily, too, is susceptible to such horrors. Yet, she later learns how to quash irrational fears and understands that the numinous is only a product of the human mind formed in the darkness of human psychology.

However, Radcliffe also acknowledges the universal appeal of mythopoesis (or, to put it more "bluntly", superstition and mythomania) as expressed through fairy tales: Dorothee and Ludovico, Villefort's servants, are charmed by such stories. An even more irrational (and specifically Oriental) tone is introduced through a Provencal Tale which Ludovico reads while waiting in Villeroi's chamber, expecting the appearance of ghosts.³³ Though Radcliffe acknowledges the power of myths and superstitions to fascinate, she tries to debunk such stories. Her ambiguous attitude towards darker resonances within human psychology is better expressed when she turns her attention to less *mythic*, and more *legendary*, concerns. The real inspiration for her analysis of atavistic urges towards the "uncanny" lies in a long forgotten, but nonetheless verifiable, past: the time of barbaric German tribes, the Goths. The bandits in the narrative, including Montoni, do not function as human robbers only, but are "avatars" of a particular kind of human dysfunction and malice. They stand as a reminder that even in France, even in a bucolic setting, deceit and opportunism thrive. In a passage which finds an echo in Raymond's journey in *The Monk*, the Villeforts travel to meet Emily, and, en route, are "taken in" (in both senses) by the inhabitants of an "ancient fortress".³⁴ Already they have encountered a very Gothic portent: "a monumental cross"³⁵ marking a spot polluted by murder (another luckless aristocrat, Count de Beliard, having been killed there by a group

of banditti). However, despite the admonitions of the guides, the Villeforts take shelter in the fortress, with denizens of the forest who claim to be hunters. Predictably enough, they turn out to be nothing of the kind: Villefort's daughter Blanche hears them plotting to poison their guests, in vicarious revenge upon the aristocracy in general. This might seem petty; indeed, the whole passage might be taken as nothing more than a reflection of the bourgeois/aristocratic fear of the lower orders. Once again, the *quondam* villainous aristocracy is shown as beleaguered, enfeebled (or "feminised") and at the mercy of the frighteningly virile peasantry.³⁶ However, Radcliffe utilises historical references to make the incident more compelling, both psychologically and culturally. She draws an analogy between the bandits and the Goths, suggesting that the wild spirit of the latter has endured through the centuries. Her "bandit" symbolises a more universal, atavistic, barbarity: "On his head he wore a leather cap, somewhat resembling in shape an ancient Roman helmet: but the brows beneath it would have characterized those of the barbarians who conquered Rome"³⁷ He is portrayed in terms less suitable to a petty thief than to a plunderer of Western Civilisation. Such lawlessness, however, not only infects moor and countryside, but the very structure of civilised societies. These malefactors may be defined by their isolation from the sentimental "norm"; however, their barbarism is consciously chosen, and makes them not so much exiles as marauders, always able to encroach upon civilisation by brute force.

Radcliffe depicts in *Udolpho* the aporia in the eighteenth century worldview. She finds the root of the dysfunction in both society and individuals in the divided nature of the age itself. The Manichean division between feminine and masculine worlds is the main source of conflict. Though she lampoons the

"excessive sensibility" of the weak characters like St. Aubert and Valancourt, still she places her faith in the regenerative properties of the sentimental "feminine" world. Her criticism targets only the ineffectual side of that culture. In critiquing the "masculine world", she suggests that atavistic, uncivilised, primitive urges, dating back to a time of tribal barbarism, still endure in her own age. Her villains belong in the wilderness; in civilised society they can only be a disruptive force. Conversely, sentimental heroes remain passive and too sensible. Sometimes they fall victim to the same urges. This distinction is a most Romantic one: that of the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses in human nature. Although Radcliffe never uses these terms, it is obvious that the sentimental or feminine world is informed by the Apollonian principle, and the bandits' *demi-monde* by the Dionysian. There is much to admire in both, but Radcliffe is too much a product of her milieu to appreciate the Dionysian for its own sake, as Romantic writers were to do: instead, she takes it as both threat and necessary medicine--a side to human existence which sentimental characters fail to acknowledge, at their peril. Like many Gothic writers, she tentatively posits the desirability of *synthesis*. It is, however, Emily, on whose shoulders Radcliffe puts the responsibility of amalgamating the two different modes of existence. Radcliffe appears to intend to show her as a perfect model of balance to be imitated.

In its overall view, *Udolpho* illustrates not life in the later Middle Ages, so much as life in the eighteenth century, with its dogmatic and passionate obsessions and its divided nature, which find expression both in the characters and the setting. Unlike Walpole and subsequent gothicists, Radcliffe does not credit external forces, or occurrences inexplicable by reason. She remains, however, fatalistic in another way: she is a little complacent and uncritical while

dealing with the conflicts and tensions specific to her age. Though she makes some pertinent observations on her society, she is limited by its contingent norms, treating them as truths self-evident (or "universally acknowledged"). Optimistically, she believes in her age; she is proudly English. She tries to preserve (and correct) bourgeois values. Her criticism is not destructive: she deplores only the conflict in human society between masculine and feminine powers. Salvation does not come from a Deus Ex Machina, but from the exercise of quotidian temperance and reason. She attempts to combine reason with feeling in the character of Emily, and make of her a new individual type who is both sensitive, generous, and able to use her reason to solve her problems. All this despite Emily's passivity and credulity. Indeed the final "message" of the novel appears to be the triumph over evil, not of good, but of domesticity, even banality. However, evil too has its banal or petty side, and is none the less a threat for that--such a side to wickedness may be glimpsed in the character of Ambrosio, in *The Monk*.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II.

¹ Given the novel's peculiar role as an "approved" form of artistic expression for women, this is unsurprising. However, Radcliffe's choice of *genre* is interesting: although there are hints of Gothic in Austen's male characters (as there were to be more in the Brontës' work), those writers concentrated on the niceties (or vexations) of social decorum in a way that Radcliffe does not. *Udolpho* is, paradoxically, more of a *psychological* study, despite the implausible characterisation: it addresses truths *not* universally acknowledged, because of their unpalatability. If it lacks both the overt violence and supernatural elements of male gothicists' works, it maintains the note of unease.

² That hierarchy itself was being redefined in terms of wealth and commercial prowess, rather than good breeding; lineage was only of interest to the aristocracy, or "gentry", as they were becoming known, eager to preserve some means of distinguishing themselves from the "upwardly mobile" commercial classes. An important sub-theme in *Udolpho* is the fear of the lower orders; in this respect the work is important as a product of a transitional age in which Gothic's "evil aristocrats" are joined by the *older* demonised figures of a previous age: ". . . in an older, frankly aristocratic society words denoting classes of inferior status, probably originally without overtones of scorn, have all been given such overtones--villain, mob, vulgar, and the like. In our time, the process has been reversed, and words like noble, aristocrat, elite, cultured, refined are in many quarters used apologetically, and preferably avoided". Crane Brinton, "Utopia and Democracy," *Utopias and Utopian Thoughts*, ed. Frank E. Manuel (London: Souvenir Press Ltd., 1973) 67.

³ "The northern Renaissance ideal was the product of an engaging of certain Italian Renaissance ideals upon preexisting northern traditions. This can be seen very clearly in the case of the most prominent northern Renaissance intellectual movement, *Christian humanism*. Agreeing with Italian humanists that medieval Scholasticism was too ensnarled in logical hair-splitting to have any value for the practical conduct of life, northern Christian humanists nonetheless looked for practical guidance from purely biblical, religious precepts". Burns 436.

⁴ "Cynical in his view of human nature, Machiavelli maintained that all men are prompted exclusively by motives of self interest, particularly by desires for personal power and material property." (Burns 423.) The personalities of Gothic villains confirm Machiavelli's scepticism of all human goodness.

⁵ Radcliffe 1: 50.

⁶ Radcliffe takes her terminology directly from the Italian--an indication of a genuine interest in the "otherness" of Continental European cultures, at least as far as their *failings* (or "lack of Englishness") are concerned..

⁷ Burns 747.

⁸ In *Otranto* and later Gothic works, *The Monk*, *Frankenstein* and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the feminine side of a culture is always under threat. The representatives of civilised norms are either raped and murdered, or suffer repeated persecution.

⁹ In accordance with the feminine tone of the novel, Radcliffe blurs the gender roles of her characters. The female characters as depicted are never completely confined to the house and family. They participate actively in social life, while conversely the "feminine" males such as St. Aubert, Valancourt, and Count de Villefort, may sometimes be confined to the house and lead domestic lives.

¹⁰ Geary claims that rather than dealing with the "numinous" alone, Radcliffe "works to temper the numinous to the sublime and the sublime to the domestic." Geary 44.

¹¹ Radcliffe 1: 168-170.

¹² Radcliffe 1: 175.

¹³ In accordance with Burke's notion "When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modification, they may be, and they are delightful . . ." (Burke 36-37.) While Radcliffe

abolishes the distance between Emily and the danger itself, she builds the same distance now between the reader and the novel itself.

¹⁴ A middle class wife "was responsible for the moral education of her children". (Burns 746.) In *Udolpho*, this sort of education is given not by Madame Aubert, but by her husband.

¹⁵ Radcliffe 1: 6.

¹⁶ Radcliffe 1: 26.

¹⁷ On a visit to M. Quesnel's chateau, which was once his property, Aubert laments that the old chestnut tree is being cut down; " "Good God! exclaimed St. Aubert, "you surely will not destroy that noble chestnut . . . How often, in my youth, have I climbed among its broad branches". (Radcliffe 13.) He is no longer the rational man who advises his daughter to avoid sentimentality. More calmly he says "I am talking of times and feelings as old-fashioned as the taste that would spare that venerable tree" Radcliffe13.

¹⁸ Botting 65.

¹⁹ It would appear that the Gothic genre had to wait some time for a well-balanced personality, finding one only in Lewis's *The Monk*, where Raymond, the credulous character acquires wisdom through experience. He is more successful than Emily in achieving synthesis between his heart and his mind; his past and his present. Even he, however, is not particularly engaging, reverting at the end to a dull uncritical cipher. Emily is certainly a more interesting character than he; this would suggest that the Gothic genre's finest achievement does not (and perhaps should not be expected to) reside in the portrayal of balanced characters. It is, after all, a literature of grotesque hyperbole and caricature--the good are satirized as mordantly as the bad, albeit less frequently.

²⁰ Radcliffe 2: 178.

²¹ Radcliffe 2: 177.

²² Radcliffe 2:178.

²³ Radcliffe 1: 125.

²⁴ After Cheron's death, he becomes the sole authority over Emily; he calls her to duty, and imposes his own standards of "rational" behaviour on her: " . . . he told her that he had been willing to spare himself and her the trouble of useless contest, in an affair where his will was justice, and where she should find it law; and therefore endeavored to persuade, rather than to compel, her to the practice of her duty". (Radcliffe 2: 49.) Like Manfred's calling Isabella to duty, Montoni's concept of duty is again related to economic gain from the marriage.

²⁵ Bertolini and Verezzi pursue Emily in the dark corridors of the castle with "evil motives": "The light which Verezzi carried flashed upon the walls; both appeared, and, instantly perceiving Emily, pursued her . . . [Verezzi] turned to the light, and proceeded with the same stealing steps towards Emily's apartment". Radcliffe 2: 101-102.

²⁶ He first hopes that a marriage between Emily and Count Morano will provide him with these emoluments: "since her marriage with the count would be so advantageous . . . it should be celebrated without further delay, and, if that was necessary, without her consent". (Radcliffe 220.) However, after his encounter with Orsino, a criminal who, through hiring assassins murdered a Venetian nobleman, Montoni finds an easier, and more profitable way of getting money and hence power.

²⁷ Radcliffe 2: 135.

²⁸ One thinks immediately of Bluebeard, or Scherazade's unfortunate predecessors.

²⁹ It is, unfortunately, not entirely unlikely that Radcliffe simply forgot about this particular motif and did not return to it until a careful inspection of earlier installments reminded her of her duty as a gothicist!

³⁰ Radcliffe 2:18.

³¹ Radcliffe 2: 334.

³² Radcliffe 2: 334.

³³ Radcliffe displays her knowledge of the literary origins of these tales, interrupting her own novel to account for their dissemination: "The fictions of the provencal writers, whether drawn from the Arabian legends brought by the Saracens into Spain, or recounting the chivalric exploits performed by the crusaders whom the troubadours accompanied to the East, were generally splendid, and always marvellous both in scenery and incident . . . The reader will perceive that it is strongly tinctured with the superstition of the times". (Radcliffe 2: 222.) This is both an apology for the supernatural, (and indeed the Oriental) and a device consciously applied by Radcliffe to make the reader sceptical towards the existence of supernatural power.

³⁴ Radcliffe 2: 278.

³⁵ Radcliffe 2: 272.

³⁶ See Radcliffe 2: 284-286. The bandits are not simple-minded thugs but smugglers, who soliloquise most self-pityingly on *their* dispossessed and marginalised status. The first ruffian says "we run the chance of the wheel for smuggling a few pounds of tobacco, to cheat the king's manufactory, and of breaking our necks down the precipices in chase of our food . . ." (Radcliffe 2: 284-285) Conventionally enough, the Villeforts escape from this predicament--the whole episode is, dramatically speaking, rather uninteresting and unnecessary. It is the author's *tone* which is worthy of note.

³⁷ Radcliffe 2: 282.

CHAPTER III

A Creed Outworn:

the Perverse Survival of Barbarism in a Sentimental Age

Lewis's *The Monk* and Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* go against Neo-Classical convention by inclining towards the negative, the macabre, the pathetic, the passionate, the picturesque, and the grotesque in life. Through themes of dysfunction and schizophrenia, and disjointed narratives which violate artistic homogeneity, Lewis and Maturin convey (or caricature) social and cultural defects inherent in "Enlightenment" society and in its institutions. The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were not merely an age of decorum, but a time of crisis for society and the sentimental conception of personal identity. Cultural complexity,¹ creating disorder both in institutions and in human psychology, finds expression in both works.²

Neither work is a *tract*: Lewis was a callow diplomatic attache, who set out deliberately to make a contribution to the Gothic (and was giddily pleased with himself when he achieved that end); Maturin was an Anglo-Irish Anglican curate of rather unorthodox opinions (whose castigation of Catholicism sits uneasily with a sympathetic portrayal of the Irish peasantry). The imaginative frenzy and inventiveness in both novels--as well as the hybridised over-ornamentation of style--are often used to sardonic, or even shocking effect. In contrast to the "climate of opinion"³ of the age, which is obsessed with useful moral purpose in literature, Lewis and Maturin often make use of contemporary problems (social, political, and *ethical*) for scabrously comic, rather than didactic, purposes. Lewis provides little rationale for his depictions of crude violence and the supernatural.

Maturin frequently finds humour in the fates which his protagonists suffer. In almost all Gothic works there is murder, and there is frequently rape, or attempted rape, whether as part of the main body of narrative or as a tale recounted by one of the characters. However, Lewis describes such acts in a dispassionate manner, freer of euphemism and authorial interpolation than Maturin's tale, and therefore more disquieting. Lewis, an irresponsible young man, is--no matter how entertaining--vulnerable to charges of scepticism and amorality. He seems half in love with the desecrations and violations of innocence that make up his narrative, and his (or his characters') exclamations of horror at the discovery of such crimes do not always ring true. Likewise, Maturin's attempts at disclaimers of any sympathy for his Faustean protagonist's point of view seem laboured and insincere. However, both men exhibit a taste for moralising: Lewis was no Beckford, and Maturin no Sterne. This tension between sanctimoniousness and *Schadenfreude*, as much as any other opposition, drives the two novels.

It is the purpose of this chapter to propose a metaphorical reading of both texts: one in which the pseudo-medieval imagery stands, *mutatis mutandis*, for an Augustan counterpart. It will also address the question of tension and opposition, not only as a dramatic device, but as an expression of that central dilemma of the age mentioned in the Introduction: the simultaneous repugnance towards and fascination with the old feudal and theocratic order of pre-Reformation Europe. Both novels revolve around these poles of attraction and repulsion, and thus present the reader with a sense of uncertainty and dislocation. There is something *ambiguous*, literally *shadowy*, about the precise location of Lewis's novel. By taking refuge in an extended feudal/chivalric past, Lewis detaches himself from sentimental authorial requirements: in a value-free setting--the opposite of the

urban setting of Neo-classical literature--he can address both the problematic metaphysics of his age (the existence of God and the supernatural) and the rigidity of Augustan *social* codes. Although the novel is by no means merely a tool of dialectic, one of its principal themes is the divided nature of the age. The "medieval" setting recalls a paradigm⁴ anterior to "sentimental culture", but the *perverse conduct* of Lewis's characters also pertains to eighteenth century people and practices.⁵ This creates an *outopian* (both utopian *and* dystopian) atmosphere which defamiliarizes the sentimental orthodoxy. In Maturin, the multiplicity of narrative voices allows for a more explicit comparison of the apparent (and much proclaimed) safety and security of England with the disorder without. Hence, these works are not escapist; the *opposition* in them, between ancient and modern, reflects the anxieties of Augustan society itself. The primary focus of this chapter will be on *The Monk*, as the earlier and more influential work; however, *Melmoth's* reiteration of *The Monk's* themes will not be neglected.

Both novels feature asymmetry in their structure. *The Monk* interrupts one tale to introduce another--although the various narrative strands do meet at the end. Only the recurrence of images of perversity and sadism really make *Melmoth* any more than a series of vignettes.⁶ Maturin renders the style even more tortuous, and his narratives even more dislocated, by constant (and rather fussy) use of quotations and authorial interpolations. Lewis is the more successful of the two writers in terms of stylistic felicity: his novel is (in terms of Freudian resonance as well as structure!) polymorphous while Maturin's is frequently simply amorphous.

Lewis's convoluted style complements his theme in portraying the chaotic relationship (or conflict) between human nature and social institutions. He manages to include two major established genres--tragedy and romance--as well as some minor ones--legend and fairy tale. The use of double generic structure had, following Walpole, become a tradition in itself. Thus Lewis remains true to the climate of his age, and can use that tradition to make his depiction of conflict more thorough. As Fred Botting argues ". . . certain stock features provide the principal embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties [of the age]. Tortuous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images and life threatening pursuits predominate in eighteenth century [literature]".⁷ Lewis uses the same stock features of the burgeoning Gothic genre (some derived directly from romance) as Walpole: sexually perverse (or incestuous) villains, spectres, corpses, and skeletons appear in his novel, embodying both the threat of the past and the neuroses of the present. The castles of *Otranto* and *Udolpho* persist. But characteristically he adds his own devices: the villainous monk, the ruthless nun, the seducing demon, and the greedy bandits. The conventional Gothic "evil aristocrat" is represented both by the jaded Lady Lindenberg and the long dead Bleeding Nun (formerly an aristocrat).⁸ Lewis gives his sentimental critique of the medieval legacy a theological turn by setting much of his tale in an abbey and a monastery. His utilisation of traditional motifs allows him to abandon Neoclassical aestheticism, and to portray a world torn between the "ancient and the modern".⁹ Although much of Lewis's tale seems to be a picaresque romp, there is a *darker* sub-text, which implies the lack of positive interaction between the old and new forms of life. All the characters (the villains and the heroes) fall victim to an alienation of the present from the past. For

Lewis, history, rather than the unconscious, is the dark side of human existence which his characters try, unsuccessfully, to repress (or, to be more specifically Freudian, to surmount).¹⁰ The archaic legacy of feudalism may be driven underground, but must eventually irrupt. Hence, the metaphor whereby dreadful pasts intrude upon the characters' present lives, in the shape of phantoms and demons. Through this theme *The Monk* incorporates all that the Enlightenment left unexplained (the mysteries of the past world that reason was beginning to dismantle), and compares and contrasts the rational sentimental order of the age with its unacknowledged, anachronistic, or despised counterpart.

To illustrate this division Lewis tells two stories: the first about the Church, the second about the aristocracy. He depicts the two groups within those literary genres most commonly associated with their respective world views: tragedy (as it was understood in the Middle Ages) and romance. To convey the grandiose style and the fantastic heritage of the aristocracy Lewis uses romance elements; to indict the behavior of the clergy, he borrows tragic motifs from Christian mythos, notably Adam's "original sin" and fall. However, these archaic motifs serve, in addition, to illustrate more topical social and psychological problems: Lewis tells a tale of corruption in institutions, and describes the way in which people, caught between the strictures of those institutions and their own passions, *become* transgressive villains or victims.

Lewis and Maturin, like the Jacobean dramatists before them, set their stories in Spain, a bastion of Papal and Inquisitional power. From Walpole on, British gothicists always play on fear of Rome. Distrust of Catholicism (or Southern European Catholic states) was common ground for English authors,¹¹ especially Gothic writers. Baldick sees the source of this obsession in Protestant

fear of Papal control (the root cause of most English military intervention on the continent at that time)¹². In its paranoid imagination, "popular martyrology persuaded itself that its hard-won liberties could at any moment be snatched from it by papal tyranny and the ruthless wiles of the Spanish Inquisition".¹³

Gothic villains, usually bearing Catholic names, demonstrate bigotry and perversion. The heroes, (often bearing Protestant, or at least ambiguous, names) embody classically "reasonable", sentimental, *English* attitudes. *Melmoth's* hero is an Anglo-Irish Protestant, as is his eponymous ancestor. So is Stanton, undeservedly thrown into an asylum. True, the asylum scene affords Maturin an opportunity to lampoon Puritans also, but the Catholic church receives most of his opprobrium. The reluctant monk Moncada is atypical: illegitimate, and so to be considered misbegotten, never acknowledged, he is forced into a convent, under the pretext of absolution of his parents' sin. There, of course, he chafes not only under the petty restrictions of monasticism, but under the assumption that he was naturally suited to the monkish life. His entrapment and his attempt to escape, in the forced company of a monk who previously killed his own father, occasion sympathy on the reader's part. However, it is instructive to note that Moncada's prayers during his monastic torment are described as *untutored* (which surprises the Bishop, pleasing him all the more) and he rebels against his own church's strictures. Furthermore, Immalee's disillusionment with European society is expressed in an explicit contrast between Christians and "Catholics". Expecting to find true Christians in Spain, she encountered "Only Catholics".¹⁴ Catholicism is portrayed as unhealthy, and inimical to the psychological well-being of its own practitioners. While the crypto-Protestant heroes try to impose order, the Catholic villains bring only transgression, disorder, and perversity.

Both Lewis and Maturin mock deeply rooted social institutions for their inability either to prepare individuals for the new provisions and requirements of social life, or to instill compassion in people. A cruel contrast is drawn between the avowed aims of the Catholic Church, and its actual practices: in both novels the Church exploits people merely to maintain power, creating perverse individuals in the process. Maturin relentlessly lampoons Spanish (although not Irish) Catholicism, and condemns both the sterility of monastic life and the imposture and cruelty of the Inquisition. He suggests that sadism has become a part of the Church's methodology. Lewis's attitude is more evenhanded. Above all, for him, Catholicism is *inappropriate* to the modern world: it cannot adapt itself to the social changes brought about by economic and technological advances. He sees its dogmatic certainty as an intransigent abandonment of reason,¹⁵ but likewise sees his own culture's rationalism as but another dogma, equally one-sided and ultimately deleterious to human happiness. He addresses the cause-effect relation between Catholic repression and Protestant rationalism and liberalism, and satirizes *both* world views. If Catholic repression served, historically, to provoke its antithesis in secular Protestantism, which, in turn, initiated a materialistic world¹⁶, then Lewis's Spain is both Augustan England's progenitor and its *Doppelganger*, its evil twin. It serves as a correlative through which Lewis can address the nature of sentimental culture and its institutions. Thus, the tacit counterpoint of Spain and England (made more explicit in Maturin's work) serves to illuminate the deficiencies of both systems. At first, Lewis seems to subscribe to the secular viewpoint of his age and nation; his heroes try to liberate themselves from archaic tyranny, and his villains, the

Prioress and Ambrosio, are psychotics, whose deviance infects their institutions. However, he also mocks secular attitudes, as will be seen.

In the opening chapter, before the story takes its two different courses, Lewis provides a social panorama of both Spanish society and, by extension, his own culture. The Spaniards are a metaphor for English people. Aristocrats and middle class people are presented side by side. Don Christoval and Lorenzo represent the first, and Elvira, Antonia, and Leonella the second. Interestingly, this middle class can be seen both as an upwardly mobile bourgeoisie (Elvira is descended from a cobbler) and as an impoverished, "shabby genteel," branch of a decaying aristocracy (the deceased husband of Elvira having been cut off by his family for his "ignoble" marriage). Such social fluidity was a feature of *English*, rather than Spanish, society at that time.¹⁷ So is the worldliness of the "comic crowd": "the Audience assembled in the Capuchin Church was collected by various causes, but all of them were foreign to the ostensible motive."¹⁸ This hints not at the Middle Ages and sincere (if blind) faith, but the loose morality of the eighteenth century. The unhealthy structures of both the individual and society are revealed. Madrid, a "city where superstition reigns" and where "true devotion would be a fruitless attempt",¹⁹ assembles not in honour of God, but of a man, Ambrosio. The audience--especially *women* from all social groups--come to hear not the sermon itself, but the speaker. The presence of so many people, Lewis portentously (and somewhat pompously) announces, should not

encourage the idea that the Crowd was assembled either from motives of piety or thirst for information . . . Some were attracted by curiosity to hear an orator so celebrated; Some came because they had no better means of employing their time till the play began;"²⁰

Lewis presents a very materialistic interpretation of religion *as a way of life*: "The Women came to show themselves, the Men to see the Women . . . and one half of Madrid was brought thither by expecting to meet the other half."²¹ The crowd quite cheerfully uses the church as a convenient locus for sexual overtures. As such, it reflects the prevailing mood of the age. Derek Jarret describes the dilemma of a society torn between the secular and the spiritual.

European states and European churches had fallen like ninepins before the onslaught of atheism and rationalism . . . The European nations had moved from superstition to blasphemy and back within a generation and it was hardly surprising that God had turned his face from them.²²

Lewis's profane crowd is equally lost. Although the church is used for worldly purposes, a yearning for true faith is nevertheless obvious. When "the Friar [Ambrosio] spoke . . . every one listened with interest and emotion. They who were insensible to religion's merits, were still enchanted with Ambrosio's oratory"²³ The laity, "the simple", require an *example*, an exemplary human figure to follow--both saint and demagogue. However, since the crowd is denied moral guidance, and correction, this longing expresses itself in a purely superstitious reliance upon Ambrosio's charisma, or even through sexual obsession on the women's part. This comes close to idolatry--breaking the First Commandment.²⁴ Their superstitious credulity is a palliative for their real psychological deficiencies and want of faith. However, it leaves them passive and timorous. They are not dumb to the existence of an Almighty creator, but for them, He is a vengeful God, susceptible only to cajolery and flattery. Ambrosio

inveighed against the vices of humanity, and described the punishments reserved for them in a future state. Every Hearer looked back upon his past offences, and trembled . . . But when Ambrosio spoke of the excellence of an unsullied conscience, of the glorious prospect which Eternity presented . . . His Auditors felt their scattered spirits insensibly return. They threw themselves with confidence upon the mercy of their *judge*²⁵ (emphasis mine)

Only *other* monks, whose ambition is equal to Ambrosio's, but so far thwarted, show antagonism: the crowd contains ". . . half a dozen rival Orators, determined to find fault with and ridicule the discourse".²⁶ Ambrosio exercises his power (and satisfies his pride); the crowd content--even sate--themselves with the animal magnetism of the orator.

Although everybody in Madrid knows this "holy" man, nobody knows either his origin or how he came there. It is rumored that he was found before the church when he was an infant and has never been outside the abbey walls. To the crowd, the Abbot is a heavenly creature, "a present to them from the Virgin"²⁷ who has nothing to do with the outside, corrupt world. Religion, and its agents likewise, are misunderstood by the crowd--and thereby rendered both more numinous, and more banal. This note of contempt on Lewis's part for the misconceptions of his innocent but foolish characters is maintained throughout the novel. A later example of such ignorance is provided by Jacinta, a burlesque of petit-bourgeois respectability and pious small-mindedness. She is a figure of fun, even when expounding her view of religion as a propitiatory defence against supernatural forces. She perceives Ambrosio not as a monk, a soldier of the Church and its teaching, but as a man armed with supernatural weapons. After

Elvira's death (or murder) she beseeches the monk to "Watch this night in the haunted chamber; Lay the Apparition [of Elvira] in the Red Sea".²⁸ For her, the authority of the Church, "made flesh" in Ambrosio, is best expressed through its power of exorcism. This distorted image of the institution, this new, *deviant*, belief, is tolerated, indeed encouraged, by the Church, which stands to gain by *confirming* such beliefs, thus perpetuating its authority. Meanwhile, the crowd's own needs are met: they hope to regain innocence and virtue, simply by idolizing Ambrosio.

Paradoxically, then, only the superstition so despised in the eighteenth century can offer an alternative to worldliness, thus acting as a catalyst towards a spirituality of sorts. Geary claims that in the Protestant world of Britain and North-West Europe, at least, "The reformation itself denounced much of the supernaturalism of the medieval church as superstition . . . But in the decades after 1688 such beliefs slowly gave place to a more reasonable, less mysterious form of religion."²⁹ The reasonableness of this new post-Reformation bourgeois faith, however, appears to promulgate ignorance no less than its ultramontane counterpart and progenitor. Lewis's criticism of the corruption and reactionary stance of Catholicism in Spain is a metaphor for all institutionalized despotism. The mythos of Protestant secularism like the heritage of Catholic repression gives rise to neurosis and wickedness. The psychological pain of such materialistic drives is, ironically, cured through the superstition or dogma which created them in the first place.

Certainly, Lewis's depiction of the supplication found in a Catholic society also suggests the more superstitious side of English Methodism. Geary quotes from its charismatic leader, the *quondam* Anglican priest John Wesley: "The

English in general . . . have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions, as mere old wive's fables. I am sorry for it . . . [because] . . . the giving up [of] witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible."³⁰ The weakening of faith in the secular, rationalistic eighteenth century *was* noted and deplored. There are strong parallels between Wesley's claim for the usefulness of superstition as a vehicle to reinspire faith, and the Catholic crowd's interpretation of the Divine. In a passage only half-comic, Antonia asks a gypsy to cast her fortune. At her insistence, Leonella, too, consents to have her palm read,³¹ playing down her own interest in chiromancy. Often disguised as frivolous entertainment, there was a very real interest in such practices in eighteenth century England, largely due to dissatisfaction with the bloodless, *reasonable*, doctrines of the established church. Rational religion, for all its virtues, lacked either a psychological dimension or the immediacy required by the less educated. Lewis mocks those peasants who are ill-informed and perplexed, for the hypocrisy inherent in their contradictory behaviour. Superstition, as exemplified by the Gypsy's fortune telling, certainly provides both spirituality and a comprehensible form of consolation, and Lewis acknowledges this. Superstition promises a better world of eternal bliss, and thus reestablishes the disrupted relation between man and God. The consolation it offers is the certainty of God's eventual reward to the meek and the patient. Methodism, likewise, relied upon the comfort that such assurances could bring to the unsophisticated and resentful (as society relied upon Methodism, for all its disdain for it, to prevent such resentment leading to rebellion). Such superstitions indicate that society has already created a new system of belief, (or sub-culture) in mute and powerless protest against institutionalised religion. Although Lewis seems to agree with Wesley on the *function* of superstitions, he sees their origin

in a reaction to oppressive religious dogmas. For him, they are a by-product of the corruption in the Church and an expression of peoples' distrust of formal religion. They satisfy individual and social needs, while not troubling or endangering the status quo. The minor heresy of superstition co-exists with and props up the dominant ideology of the Church. This co-existence of authority and passive dissent becomes a metaphor for Protestantism, and shows the deficiencies of this "tradition" which claims autonomy and uniformity as a religious sect.³² Only by recasting Protestant England in the form of a superstitious Catholic society, could Lewis demonstrate the dilemma of his vacillating age. His theme of repressive Catholicism, which had assumed a political role and abandoned its original purport, allows him to show "respectable" outrage. However, the role that the Church plays in the novel, and its direct influence over all ethical and pedagogical institutions under its aegis, is so reminiscent of its eighteenth century English corollary, *Augustan* orthodoxy, as to be, if not a direct metaphor, then at least a sardonic and unflattering parallel.

Throughout *The Monk* English Neo-Classical social institutions (like the family, marriage, and education) are satirised. Their ethical codes are shown to be no less obsolete than those of Catholicism, and their effects as no less pernicious. Lewis's portrayal of a mysterious pseudo-feudal world suggests Augustan inability either to penetrate or to replace the irrational which persists, resonating with the darkness of the past. Through his sardonic sketch of bourgeois, *unorthodox*, religious conduct, Lewis derides Xthe weakening of the Church's pastoral role, suggesting that this dilution leads to moral confusion and, ultimately, unrestrained wickedness and chaos. On the other hand, he makes Ambrosio and the Prioress ruthless bigots, whose behavior is bound to create

disillusionment with the institution of religion.³³ This portrayal could be read as the precocious cynicism and scepticism of a daring, irresponsible young man--or as an unconscious recognition of the need for a *middle road* between liberty and faith, a synthesis of the assurance and codification of the medieval worldview, and the hard-won freedoms of the individual and of conscience on which Augustan England prided itself. Lewis recognizes a society in transition, trying to redefine itself, but his attitude towards it remains ambiguous. The tension between his occasional sentimental critique (itself an uneasy, prurient mixture of Richardson's delight in showing innocents in peril, and Rousseau's suggestion that all human society is corrupting) and his amoral witticism was to lay Lewis open to charges of impiety³⁴ (just as Maturin's book raised eyebrows) but such a tension was increasingly to become a part of Gothic strategies. Lewis anticipates a development in society (be it reformation, counter-reformation or restoration) which will not exclude the "spiritual aura" of the old, but will assimilate the old into the new. Who, or what, then, can provide the necessary synthesis? It is the sub-plot of *The Monk*, rather than the major tale, which offers a hopeful answer. Raymond, although initially depicted as one-dimensional gallant (as precocious as Lewis himself!), represents a more self-aware type than the other sentimental characters. Through hardship and experience, he reconciles the opposite polarities of archaic chivalry and modern sentiment, becoming balanced and "enlightened". His story begins with a wish to learn more about the world, a curiosity lacking in the other characters. He sets out on a tour to improve his education and to acquire wisdom (like many a knight in medieval romance).³⁵ In Paris he observes that beneath the people's polished exterior there is something frivolous, unfeeling and

insincere. In Germany he realises the baseness of which man is capable. Furthermore, he discovers his own inability to distinguish truth from falsehood.

A false guide leads him to a house of cutthroats who masquerade as peasants only to slaughter and rob unwary travelers; Raymond is charmed by the host, Baptiste, but sees his wife, Marguarite, as an evil, bad tempered woman. Of course, his sentimental prejudice deceives him. Marguarite turns out to be good, and Baptiste, a cold-blooded murderer. Raymond changes his notion of Marguarite: "How different did she now appear to me . . . I looked up at her as to my only resource". Lewis initially depicts Raymond as a credulous sentimental hero, who can hardly distinguish appearance from reality. However, through a series of such experiences Raymond acquires a nicety of judgement with which the superficiality of sentimental society could not provide him.

Lewis uses stock Gothic motifs of feudalism and crime to suggest that the eighteenth century, capitalistic and greedy, has its darker side (just as the supposedly chivalrous Middle Ages had), whereby conventions of hospitality and domesticity mask corruption. His depiction of the feudal world and its institutions, economic and power relations, is a metaphor for the burgeoning capitalism of the eighteenth century. Lewis illustrates the way in which "new values" have disrupted the lives of all classes. He presents two dysfunctional marriages in the story: those of Baptiste and Marguarite, Baron and Baroness Lindenberg. By choosing couples from different social classes, he indicates the *widespread* penetration of mercantilism³⁶ and vanity into the supposedly "sacrosanct" familial unit. Baptiste is Marguarite's second husband. Although Marguarite herself is not evil--she helps Raymond escape--she is married to a villain. She says, "after losing my first husband, it was impossible to join society

again . . . I had to accept one of their band for my husband . . . I became the property of the infamous Baptiste, a robber who had once been a monk."³⁷ Women of the Third Estate, in particular, are portrayed as defenceless victims--not without a certain amount of that prurient *Schadenfreude* mentioned earlier. Despite Lewis's ambiguously paternal tone, he makes a serious point. Marriage depends not on the free choice of individuals, but on economic constraints, as it does in *Otranto* and *Udolpho*. Conrad's betrothal to Isabella is merely a means through which Manfred may legitimise his position, and accrue more land and titles for his family. Emily's love for Valancourt is denied for economic reasons. The entrapment of the individual in corrupt institutions by paternalism is lamented by Marguarite: "disgusted with a world in which I have met nothing but misfortunes, my only wish is to retire into a convent."³⁸ Ironically, such a retreat is *not*, as it is for Manfred in *Otranto*, a promise of escape from the world's corruption.

The Bandits and the faithless postillion in league with them could be read as symbols of the corruption of society, extending not only to the peasantry, but to the servants and confidantes of the aristocracy also. Indeed, the aristocracy themselves have no cause for congratulation on superior moral status. Raymond's "affair" with Lady Lindenberg, who tries to seduce him, is not only a cynical (and cynically stereotyped) utilisation of the "evil aristocrat" motif so beloved of Gothic writers and their readers, but an implicit condemnation, through metaphor, of the deterioration of family ties in the newly arisen capitalist plutocracy. The marriage of Baron and Baroness Lindenberg is not a union made for love either. The point is clearly made that it is a marriage made for title and estate, and to continue the feudal order.

Upon saving the Baroness from the bandits, Raymond is invited to the Lindenberg castle. Here, Lewis parodies the literary convention of courtly love to suggest the inappropriateness of such idealistic (and simplistic) conceptions of personal relations in either a faux-medieval dystopia *or* in the opportunistic eighteenth century. This "courtly love" between Lady Lindenberg and Raymond turns into selfish lust and greed on the part of the lady. Motivated by concupiscence, she abuses her superior social status, despite her marriage vows.³⁹ When Raymond rebuffs her, she even tries to kill him in spite and revenge, playing out the role not of an abandoned woman but of a jealous masculine suitor. Again, Lewis's tone suggests a certain amusement at the predatory virago's abnegation not only of her social responsibilities but of her feminine "decorum". The bizarre switching of masculine/feminine and active/passive roles leads to further perverse consequences. Lady Lindenberg abjures *her* social responsibilities, yet when she learns of Raymond's love for her niece, she pompously proscribes their union: "My resolution is fixed and immovable. Your mistress shall remain a close Prisoner in her chamber, till she exchanges this castle for the cloister. Solitude will perhaps recall her to a sense of her *duty*".⁴⁰ (emphasis mine) The hypocrisy and ruthless pragmatism of this plan recalls Manfred's stratagems in *Otranto*: once again, family members are treated as pawns in schemes for familial (and thereby individual) advancements. It is arguable that Lady Lindenberg's inflexibility, unlike Manfred's, is inspired by simple jealousy; what *is* certain is that *duty*, for her, as for Walpole's prince, (and by extension, the decadent but tenacious aristocratic order,) is an *imperative*, not to be gainsaid on the grounds of sentiment. The love affair between Raymod and Agnes offers the ruling order neither material advancement (through a prestigious

marriage alliance), nor, as the virtuous Raymond's oddly maidenly protestations towards Lady Lindenberg prove, any chance of surreptitious exercise of "droit de seigneur" (by the *Lady*, ironically enough). The very natural relationship is forbidden on the grounds of propriety. Lady Lindenberg's hypocritical stubbornness forces Raymond to act illicitly: Raymond impregnates Agnes before marriage--and does so after she has been prepared for life as a nun. Neither institution is an obstacle for the resourceful Raymond, but there is to be no pastoral idyll for this particular aristocratic swain. There is something almost slapstick in the incongruity of the consummation of their love in a place devoted to chastity. Furthermore, this intercourse produces a baby, itself born to suffer: it will be starved to death in the dungeons of the Capuchin Church. One perversity leads to another, but it is the lovers' own naivete that sets this sequence of misfortunes in motion.

Raymond and Agnes mock the local peasantry for their belief in the ghost of the Bleeding Nun, kept in the North Tower of the Lindenberg Castle for decades. They congratulate themselves on their witty use of this "superstition" to confound Agnes's jailers. Raymond, attempting to facilitate Agnes's escape from Lindenberg Castle, suggests that she be clothed in the bloody habit of a nun when he meets her. They pay for their scepticism when Raymond is embraced by the ghost.

This would be farcical, were it not for Raymond's horror--and indeed Lewis adopts an ambiguous tone, which allows laughter as a response to this false resolution of tension. Raymond, still under the illusion that he is embracing Agnes, sees her as a conventional sentimental heroine, in need of protection: "Terrified and breathless she was unable to speak. She dropt her lamp and

dagger, and sank upon my bosom in silence".⁴¹ The Nun responds in a sentimental manner, making this unexpected union of the romantic and the uncanny enjoyably ludicrous: one dogmatic attitude is mistaken for another. Raymond's blithe optimism and romantic posturing, as expressed in his doggerel (a parody of love poetry):

Agnes! Agnes! Thou art mine!
Agnes! Agnes! I am thine!
In my veins while blood shall roll,
I am thine!
Thou art mine!
*Thine my body! Thine my soul,*⁴²

let him down once again, as they did in his encounter with the bandits. Agnes cannot escape from the castle. Raymond is carried far away, and injured. He becomes the victim of terrifying, paralyzing, nocturnal visits from the Nun. This symbolizes the power of the archaic to persist, and throw the lives of sentimental, optimistic individuals into chaos. The tyranny and irrationality of the past contaminate later, apparently more liberal, societies and individuals: as in *Otranto*, the sins of past generations are visited upon their heirs.

Raymond learns (from the Wandering Jew) that the Bleeding Nun is the apparition of a long dead relative whose licentiousness resulted in her death on the moors. She now requires that Raymond carry her bones back to their common home for burial. The present freedom and happiness of Raymond depend on his willingness to grant forgiveness and absolution to what is, quite literally, the skeleton in his closet. He does so, and this action releases him from his torment. It is peculiarly apposite that the solution to his problems is provided by the

Wandering Jew. The presence of this legendary figure of penitence fulfils several functions. On a purely literal level, it can be seen that Lewis is reinforcing the quasi-medieval atmosphere of his setting by throwing in a stock representative of actual legends from the Dark Ages. More symbolically, Raymond's encounter with this anachronistic sorcerer suggests a willingness on his part to engage with that part of the medieval heritage which could still teach the eighteenth century something of value. Finally, the Wandering Jew stands as a kind of negative correlative to Raymond: his eternal punishment, incurred for his mockery of the suffering Christ, admits of no mitigation until Judgement Day. Neither repentance nor charity can alter his fate, while Raymond still has it in his power to avoid his own doom. Through his reconciliation with the past, Raymond gains his individual freedom and acquires wisdom. Thus he recalls the heroes of the Grail Cycle: like Lancelot or Perceval confronted with the Fisher King, Raymond must show a courtly chivalrous compassion to those who have erred or been cursed, in order to save himself and those he loves.

However, this theme of chivalry is not maintained, but rather undermined, by the portrayal of the decadence of the remnants of the aristocracy. As C.S. Lewis argues in *The Discarded Image*, "One of the false images of the good is Nobility. But Nobility is only the fame of our ancestors' virtue, which was a good of theirs, not ours"⁴³ This *humility* was, paradoxically, widespread in the Age of Chivalry itself, but had been lost in the interim, to be replaced by a more single minded emphasis on ancestry. By the eighteenth century, it was no longer land, or the size of a private army of retainers, that signified nobility, but rather gentility and "good breeding". This shift started earlier in England than in Spain: John Morrill argues that

A gentleman [peer or gentry] was expected to be hospitable, charitable, fair minded . . . He was distinguished from his country neighbor, the yeoman as much by attitude of mind and personal preference as by wealth . . . This pattern shifted in the late seventeenth century--professional men, merchants and town governors became bolder in asserting that they were as good as the country gentleman. The definition of "gentility" was stretched to include them without prior purchase of land.⁴⁴

The aristocracy, often impoverished, and frequently less wealthy, important or influential than the rising business class, were forced into becoming more "bourgeois" and, in consequence, more "unprincipled" in their attitudes. Lewis parodies both the false, nostalgic conception of the "virtue" of the nobility, and any utopian picture of the past. His aristocratic villains are in fact imbued with the values of the "sentimental" middle class. However, this combination of aristocratic pride and nascent middle class respectability is not only hypocritical, but harmful. As represented in the novel, (in contrast to Morrill's definition), the nobility are neither hospitable, charitable, nor fair minded, but only seem so. Lewis uses the motifs of romance to burlesque the degenerated "courtly" lives of aristocrats who are, in fact, quite bourgeois in their affairs.⁴⁵ This class becomes a mirror in which the socio-economic changes of a transitional period are reflected.

In contrast to the hidebound "nobility", (a residue of the past) Agnes and Raymond are depicted as products of that transitional period. Their "modern" attitudes are unconstrained either by the corrupt feudal system, or by dogmatic Catholicism. Baldick sees this as intrinsic to Gothic: "symptomatic of the nightmare world is the familiar contention by which the Gothic writer has to

provide for the hero and heroine of the tale some reassuring Protestant credentials by making them, although Roman Catholic, secretly immune from the impostures of their own faith".⁴⁶ The "Protestant" attitudes of the characters are not here made quite so explicit, but when Raymond and Agnes follow their own instincts (rather than allowing the Church and aristocracy to dictate their opinions), they act like liberal Protestants, attempting autonomy. When they encounter obstacles, they decide, optimistically to elope: a course of action prompted by sentiment, but in their reactionary society wholly insufficient. They are naive, and seem oddly "out of time". Lewis mocks the absurdity of their sentimental rationality as much as the Nun's ghostly embodiment of anachronistic corruption. This scorn for the incapacity of dogmatic humanists to understand (or *withstand*) an *older* dogma is expressed through laughter. While castigating the oppressive nature of the Catholic world (the archaic culture), Lewis suggests that the inexperienced, reason-bounded nature of the liberal Protestant world (the sentimental culture) leaves it all too often a prey to such oppression. Individuals like Raymond and Agnes are caught between these polarities, and thus precipitate the conflict which nearly crushes them.

Lewis's use of romance serves another, more psychological, purpose. Raymond goes through a series of natural and supernatural adventures, encountering both worldly temptations and supernatural threats. Romance gives Lewis the chance to depict Raymond in a fantastic milieu, *away from* the conventions of Augustan society (and its literature). Raymond is engaged in supernatural and *truly* courtly activities: he acts like a medieval knight, rescuing those in trouble. Furthermore, Lewis not only imitates romance, but *incorporates*

medieval motifs into his work. His utilisation both of his own pastiches of medieval romance (the Bleeding Nun) and genuine legends (the Wandering Jew) subverts Neoclassical literary values. As Botting points out, "romance, the tales of magical occurrences and exotic adventures that drew on the customs and superstitions of the Middle Ages, met, from the late seventeenth century on, with disapproval".⁴⁷ Lewis's successful use of "disreputable" motifs suggests that violation of the rational framework and aestheticism of Augustan literature was, after all, a possible means towards diagnosis of individual and social problems.⁴⁸

Lewis's primary theme is, however, one of a more modern nature: the advantages and pitfalls of a *sentimental* approach to life. Raymond's eventual triumph stands in contrast to the fate of Antonia, all "sweetness and sensibility".⁴⁹ Leonella describes her thus: "a young Creature, who is totally ignorant of the world, she has been brought up in an old Castle in Murcia with no other society than her Mother's."⁵⁰ She is depicted stereotypically, according to sentimental convention: she is a barely demarcated representative of the daughters of middle class families, as Maturin's Immalee is a stock "noble savage". She never departs from her prescribed (and circumscribed) social role. Her naiveté and her unwillingness to acknowledge the world's brutality make her an obvious potential victim, yet she and her demise are oddly unaffecting. She is a pawn, both in Ambrosio's game, and in the dramatic manipulations of Lewis himself. Maturin's Immalee is a more *engaging* character--the reader feels empathy with her disillusionment far more than with Antonia's blundering into death. Antonia never *grows*: she never learns how vulnerable her dependence on sentiment and familial piety has left her. Immalee is granted a monologue on her unhappy state; Antonia's innermost feelings are never really made plain, and so she remains a

mute witness to scenes of depravity. She meets even her own death with scarcely an articulate protest. Therefore, *upbringing* and *instruction* (or lack of it) are central issues in the novel.

Through his "education in life", and in contrast to the sentimental characters, Raymond achieves balance. He is neither totally pure and naive, nor warped and deviant. The different traits which inform his personality make him more realistic than Lewis's stage villains and victims. He becomes a more successful exemplary figure: he does not repress his sexuality--he makes love to Agnes--but remains faithful, despite Lady Lindenberg's blandishments. His ordeal leads, eventually, to salvation and reunion, not only with Agnes, but with the aristocratic stratum of society with which he is temporarily at odds. The "sentimental" conclusion of a new life in the Spanish colonies is actually rather unsatisfactory, suggesting as it does that all the torments meted out on the innocent by a cruel and unforgiving system fade into insignificance once readmittance to the privileged ruling order is granted. Indeed, even righteous indignation at the injustices of the Church is forgotten. Raymond is *assimilated*, like a prodigal son, rather than as a crusader against oppression. However, Raymond at least survives, unlike the more one-dimensional characters. It is the other story in *The Monk*, that of Ambrosio, which gives a truly nihilistic message of ineluctable damnation.

The first and major story in *The Monk* is again built upon the conflict between individual urges and institutional morality, but this time shows the individual's helplessness and defeat. As pseudo-feudalism *stood for* capitalism in the story of Raymond, so Catholicism stands for all institutionalized religion in both Ambrosio's story in *The Monk* and Moncada's tale in *Melmoth*. Rather than

portraying religion itself as a corrupting force, Lewis and Maturin dwell on its rejection of human nature. However, Lewis's conception of psychology is one in which sexuality plays a disproportionate role; in consequence, *deviant* sexuality is for him both the result of oppression and the cause of further individual catastrophe.⁵¹ While the age totally (and hypocritically) rejects sexuality, *The Monk*, in reaction, hinges upon it. Whereas in *Otranto* and *Udolpho* there is only an implicit recognition of its role in determining power relations, in *The Monk* sexuality's power to generate individual and social perversities is made explicit.⁵² Ambrosio, Lady Lindenberg, and even Raymond and Agnes are passionate, sexually motivated, characters. The "courtly love" myth in the second story, and the myth of "Catholicism" in the first, are built on sexual metaphors which Lewis adopts (and adapts) to afford him a specific example of the deformation of institutions and morality.⁵³ *The Monk* conveys the feeling of a spiritual void in the new "age of reason", filled by perverse sexuality.

To chart Ambrosio's degradation, Lewis uses motifs of tragedy, established as a Gothic tradition in *Otranto*. Almost all the gothicists used tragic elements in different forms in their works; Lewis uses them in a biblical framework. Ambrosio's descent into ignominy is, from a Christian viewpoint, analogous to the Fall itself. From Satan's temptation of Eve, her eating of the forbidden fruit of knowledge, and her encouragement to Adam to commit the same sin, derives not only expulsion from Paradise, but all subsequent human misfortune. Writers in the Western tradition dwelled upon this theme, often to very different ends: the Devil in medieval dramatic versions of this story is a peculiar compound of seductiveness and buffoonery, whereas Milton's tempter has a degree of dignity which the gothicists (and later, the Romantics) found best

expressed their own rebellious urges. If Adam's Fall is inevitable, it is preordained in a much more complex way than the fates of cursed Attic protagonists--and so, analogously, Ambrosio's damnation is more interesting, both psychologically and theologically, than Manfred's doomed position. Matilda, the agent of Satan (as she is later revealed to be) who deceives and corrupts Ambrosio, recalls both the serpent and, from a psycho-sexual (and possibly misogynist) perspective, Eve. Ambrosio's sexual attachment to Matilda exemplifies the inherited weakness of Adam (itself much commented-upon in medieval literature, although less so in romance than in canonical writings). Matilda is suborned by Satan as Eve was tempted by the Serpent, and in turn seduces Ambrosio. The "virtuous" monk is led by his weak judgement and excessive sensuality into catastrophe, just as Adam falls from grace for similar reasons.

In Ambrosio, as Axton has noted,⁵⁴ Gothic fiction acquires its most (apparently) dynamic and compelling villain (or anti-hero). Ambrosio's dramatic stature, and his tragic status, derive from the opposition between his original celebrity and prestige, and his final ignominy. The monk descends into total degradation (or, to use the term itself employed by writers of the period, becomes his own "antipodes"). This process of corruption is conveyed in such a way as to make its *inevitability* uncertain,⁵⁵ and thereby make Ambrosio's "progress" more fascinating than the melodrama of Raymond's vicissitudes. Although the conflict in this story consists of the same clash between human propensities and (hypocritical) institutional restrictions, the monk's fall manages to evoke *the sublime*: his excess derives from, and inspires, emotions which, Burke argued, "produced a *frisson* of delight and horror, tranquility and terror".⁵⁶

Ambrosio lacks the dramatic stature of Faust, or his late Gothic equivalent Victor Frankenstein. Although he, like Melmoth and Frankenstein, has "eaten the fruit of the interdicted tree",⁵⁷ he is not a seeker after knowledge, but a hypocritical priapic monster. His "quest" is shabby and venal. His murders are furtive and underhand, undertaken only to avoid detection for other crimes. His doom is deserved in a way that Melmoth's self-conscious despair and fruitless wanderings are not. Indeed, Melmoth is a more attractive figure in many ways, combining the Romantic drama of exile with the aristocratic disdain and cynicism of all Gothic villains.⁵⁸ Ambrosio is nonetheless a compelling figure. He is foolish, but is granted enough self-awareness to make his despair credible, and to allow a certain identification with him on the part of those readers half in love with easeful damnation. Cynicism and scepticism verging on atheism were most certainly a part of the aristocratic culture of Lewis's day (a fact noted by the Methodists who saw only worldliness and unbelief in the established Church) and an interest in doctrines of sin and rebellion against God was found on both sides of the Channel (the Marquis de Sade is a case in point). An anti-hero could be rendered *even more*, rather than less, sympathetic for his isolation from God. Truth comes from unusual sources in Gothic fiction: just as Melmoth *almost* finds redemption in his relationship with Immalee, and his sad--and very Christian--explication of the degradation of mankind, so Ambrosio *almost* halts his descent, only to be informed by the Devil that he has been no more than a pawn of Satanic manipulation all along.

Ambrosio is at first presented as an example of virtue, well known in Madrid for his "sublime" sermons, and given the ironic epithets: "celebrated orator" and the "man of holiness".⁵⁹ However, he is also a man of title, power,

and position, all of which are vitally important for him. His egotism is confirmed by the crowd's adoration: "When he remembered the Enthusiasm which his discourse had excited, his heart swelled with rapture".⁶⁰ Ambrosio, however, is a worldly creature, weak and doomed to err, and by no means suited to his "vocation". He can repress his natural drives, but their very *existence* proves his vulnerability to temptation. Ambrosio knows this, but still "Pride told him loudly that he was superior to the rest of his fellow creatures".⁶¹ He gives his sermon in full cynical awareness of the crowd's unrealistic estimation of him. He frightens the congregation with a vivid description of the devil, and castigates all sins. In his bosom, however, he carries the evils he has just described, including the mortal sin of pride--the first stage of the disastrous transformation in his personality: "He [Ambrosio] was suffered to be proud, vain, ambitious . . . He was jealous of his equals . . . He was implacable when offended, cruel in his revenge".⁶² If he is stern and unforgiving towards those whom he should lead in a spirit of generosity, he also denies himself the comfort of acknowledging his human frailty. His monastery education has already destroyed all trace of sentiment save that of self-regard:

The noble frankness of his soul was exchanged for servile humility; and in order to break his natural spirit, the Monks terrified his young mind, by placing before him all the horrors with which superstition could furnish them . . . They painted to him the torments of the Damned in colours of Most dark.⁶³

Out of fear, he represses his human side, only to have it reappear in perverse modes. Ambrosio's yearnings are originally simple and harmless, and they almost make him a sympathetic (or at least pathetic) figure. Indeed, at times ". . . his

natural good qualities would occasionally break through the gloom cast over them so carefully: At such times the contest for superiority between his *real* and *acquired* character was striking and unaccountable with his original disposition."⁶⁴ (emphasis mine) Brought up by the Church, he has never known family life, and cannot comprehend the attractions of love or matrimony.⁶⁵ However, although obscure to himself, his biological needs remain. Unaware of the strength of his sexuality, or how ill-equipped to deal with it his upbringing has left him, his sexual urges are *sublimated*, finding pleasurable expression in his only satisfaction: pride. His sense of superiority leads to an egotistic readiness to satisfy his carnal appetites. Torn between the strictures of the Church (the only code of human behaviour he has ever known) and his own nature, Ambrosio's long-suppressed instincts cause his fall: haunted by the conflict between Catholic dogmas and his natural desires, he finds an outlet for his human needs only in evil.

When his closest associate in the abbey, a virtuous young novice, announces that "he" is a woman, (Matilda) and seduces Ambrosio, he is set on a course of violence and self-destruction. The Church denies Ambrosio's sexuality, and so Matilda, the collaborator of the Devil, can easily exploit this weakest side of the Monk. Her blandishments spur him on to overcome (in purely psychological terms) or fail to live up to (from a more moralistic point of view) the monastic repression of his urges. Once seduced, he forgets his cherished "virtue". *Originally* he succumbs only to Matilda's declaration of passion. Indeed, after the first intercourse with Matilda "shame usurped her seat in his bosom."⁶⁶ Yet he cannot resist further temptations. His lust is rekindled: "Ambrosio again raged with desire: The die was thrown: His vows were already

broken; He had already committed the crime, and why should He refrain from enjoying its reward?"⁶⁷ Lewis's tone is ambiguous here, suggesting a certain commiseration with his protagonist, or even a justification of his attitude. The irony continues in a reference to Ambrosio's relief from self accusation: "Shame and remorse no longer tormented him. Frequent repetitions made him familiar with sin".⁶⁸ Ambrosio's attachment to his "Eve" blinds him to reason, and Matilda's sophistry succeeds: "I yield!" He cried, dashing the mirror upon the ground: 'Matilda, I follow you! Do with me what you will!' "⁶⁹ Literally "bewitched" by her, he no longer even attempts to put up any rational or Christian argument against her casuistry about love, sex, or even murder. After breaking his vows, Ambrosio does not think of simply leaving the monastery and leading a life more suited to his nature. The adverse effect of his upbringing on his personality makes him unable to envisage a life outside the monastic order. He stays in the monastery which both rouses and inhibits his sexuality, and is thus warped still further by his continued masquerade as a dutiful son of the Church. The monastic ideal is as inappropriate--and inimical--to him as a primitive "tribal" society would be to a Western sophisticate.

Eventually, Matilda fails to arouse Ambrosio. Her charms "becoming accustomed to him, they ceased to excite the same desires . . . In spite of her beauty, he gazed upon every other female with more desire".⁷⁰ Coincidentally he encounters Antonia. Having been separated from his mother at an early age, he is unaware that Elvira is his real mother and Antonia his sister.⁷¹ It is Antonia, who through Matilda's paean to her virtues, provides Ambrosio with a new object of lust. Unaware of their identity (albeit conscious of the gravity of the crime itself) he rapes his sister, and kills her and his mother. Although Lewis recounts

this rape and murder realistically (or pornographically), he decorates the tale with motifs from unrealistic fairy tales. After killing Elvira, Ambrosio gives Antonia an opiate. She falls into a catalepsy indistinguishable from death, and is buried in the vaults of St. Clare. From sleep she is awakened, like a "Sleeping Beauty". However, when she "comes to life" she finds no prince, only Ambrosio, who first rapes, then kills her. Matilda reveals herself as the accomplice of the Devil, and inducts Ambrosio into certain of the Black Arts⁷², and still he allows himself to be guided by her. Now he is fully and hypocritically aware of his own nature, and fears punishment. His condemnation of his own sins in others cannot purge him of the paranoia which disturbs him. To hide (or repress) his recently discovered sensuality, he commits sins more serious, urged on by Matilda.⁷³

Through the pornographic depiction of perverse *personal* relations, Lewis both violates the decorum of his age, and demonstrates the maladies which stem from the repression of sexuality. Susan Sontag, in "The Pornographic Imagination" takes "pornography" to be, not a perverse form of voyeurism, but a "group pathology, the disease of a whole culture",⁷⁴ claiming that "The problem of pornography is one of the dilemmas of a society in transition"⁷⁵ Lewis's use of pornographic elements illustrates the diseased side of the age. This disease, the story's events suggest, stems from an attempt to define a society's cultural identity and ethical codes by coercion rather than assimilation. The denial of human aspirations by the aristocratic and clerical elites who run the institutions creates an unhealthy, and reactionary society. For the neurotics thus formed, sexuality, the most abhorred and deplored human propensity, provides a medium for the assertion of individuality.

The split in Ambrosio's personality is a microcosm of the double (hypocritical) function of the Capuchin church. Schizophrenia is presented as the dominant characteristic of the Capuchin order, or Catholicism itself, which in turn stands for the intransigence and intolerance of all official religion. In an institution which had lost the respect of the readers and writers of the age, a destructive side of human nature is given dramatic hypostasis. To address the consequences of this dysfunction, Lewis decorates his narration with further violent crime. The monastery, a self-styled stronghold of virtue, is made a repository of sin. The transgressions which take place there, are far worse than any in the "vale of tears" outside its walls (as the monastic order hypocritically calls it). Agnes is immured, and her baby starved to death, by Lewis's malignant and self-centered Prioress. She is Ambrosio's female counterpart, likewise distrustful or contemptuous of innate human aspirations and vigilant in her condemnation of such drives. Identifying herself with the seemingly immaculate and inviolate--but actually corrupt--institution, she assumes a "holy" posture; yet this saintly guise cloaks an inability--or unwillingness--to treat people with any sort of human compassion. When Lorenzo attempts to enter the convent to look for his sister, "The Prioress crossed herself. She was shocked at the very idea of a man's profane eye pervading the interior of her holy mansion"⁷⁶ It is this double identity of the institution that creates a fit spawning ground for the sins of these hypocritical Gothic villains, and a fit place for Satanic arts.

Lewis's comparison of unforgiving Catholicism with Satanic machination is made explicit at the end of the novel:

He [Ambrosio] sank upon his knees, and raised his hands towards heaven. The fiend read his intention and prevented it-

'What?' He cried, darting at him a look of fury:

'Dare you still implore the Eternal's mercy? Would you feign penitence, and again act an Hypocrite's part? Villain, resign your hopes of pardon. Thus I secure my prey!'⁷⁷

Satan acts like a servant of God, trying to correct man--but his testimony (traditionally duplicitous and untrustworthy) comes only *after* Ambrosio's final breach with God--which Satan both engineers and condemns. Satan's posture ironically mirrors a tendency in the Catholic Church's intolerance to create its own monsters, its own enemies--or, given its power, its own victims.

Throughout *Melmoth*, Maturin, too, describes the process of brutalisation and dehumanisation obtaining between individual and institution. For him, repressive Catholicism creates evil characters who retreat into the very bosom of the institution, corrupting it still further. When an experienced monk urges Moncada to take an interest in the trivia of monastic life, Moncada describes those pursuits as ". . . spleen, malignity, curiosity, every passion that your retreat should have afforded me protection against."⁷⁸

The idea that Catholicism creates neurosis is one of *Melmoth's* main themes. Another old monk confesses to Moncada that his life has passed in utter, hopelessness.

I seemed a lie--I lived a lie--I was a lie--I ask pardon of my last moments for speaking the truth . . . I hated the monastic life. Inflict pain upon man, and his energies are roused--condemn him to inanimity, and he slumbers like animals . . . I never woke to hope, for I had, at the close of every day, only to number so many

deliberate mockeries of God, as exercises of devotion . . . I die without light, hope, faith, or consolation.⁷⁹

For the monk, the exercises of devotion are "deliberate mockeries". When Moncada asks why he then became a monk, the dying man says, "Because I was a monk, and wished for victims of my imposture to gratify my pride! and companions of my misery, to soothe its malignity".⁸⁰ Maturin, too, associates Catholicism with vanity, pride, and greed for power. The difference between Maturin's moribund Brother and Lewis's Ambrosio lies only in the degree to which they are capable of genuine repentance. The dying monk recognises the absence of spirituality in this degenerate form of Catholicism and the degradation it inflicts upon the individual. Thus he dies "without light, hope, faith, or consolation". Ambrosio, however, is wilful. Unable to free himself from his presumption that the church can do no wrong, he sees any act of self-advancement or gratification on the part of the clergy as permissible.

Maturin not only attacks corruption in the higher echelons of the Church, but laments a debasement of the Christian religious message. Maturin, a clergyman himself, was anxious not to be perceived as atheist or schismatic (Later editions of *Melmoth* contain his caveat against taking the words of his demonic protagonist as an expression of his own views). It is worth remembering that Melmoth finds only misery in his bargain with the Devil: he cannot persuade anyone to abjure their faith, and thereby exchange destinies with him. It is not Christianity itself that Maturin attacks, but its perversion. For him, Catholicism is the *epitome* of Christian bigotry. The Superior in *Melmoth* hints at the invalidity of questioning faith by asking Moncada, "when had reason any thing to do with religion?"⁸¹ This question forestalls any attempt at rational religious dispute. The

demands of Catholicism may well be indefensible by any rational (or sentimental) code of ethics, but any such code is portrayed as irrelevant to the Church, incompatible with its *modus operandi*.⁸² Melmoth's explication to Immalee of Christian schism suggests that secular reasons of competition lie behind all such conflicts:

They have such a religion, but what use have they made of it? Intent on their settled purpose of discovering misery wherever it could be traced, and inventing it where it could not, they have found, even in the pure pages of that book, which they presume to say, contains their title to peace on earth, and happiness hereafter, a right to hate, plunder, and murder each other . . . They call themselves by various names, to excite passions suitable to the names they bear. Thus some forbid the perusal of that book to their disciples, and others assert, that from the exclusive study of its pages alone, can the hope of salvation be learned or substantiated.⁸³

Religion (the Protestant tradition no less than the Catholic) is treated in both *The Monk* and *Melmoth* as an expression of power relations; faith itself is described far less (and therefore attacked far less) than the coercive apparatus needed to impose conformity upon a subject people, or to teach people to distrust and despise all that makes up a unified *human* community. Lorenzo's assumption that "Ambrosio's character is perfectly without reproach; and [that] a man who has passed the whole of his life within the walls of a convent, cannot have found the opportunity to be guilty"⁸⁴ suggests misprision of human nature, and--ironically--a reverencing of the institution of religion as a bower of blissful innocence. Such a

contrast drawn between worldly society and monasticism's supposed idyll indicates that the Church's propaganda has been effective.

Lewis is conventional enough to end his novel on the quintessentially Classical note of *peripeteia*: tragic reversal of circumstance. The endings of the two stories in *The Monk* coincide in the social upheaval through which all tension is resolved. In the subterranean passages of the convent Lorenzo finds a delirious Agnes, imprisoned--then forgotten--by the Prioress. Her baby is dead, but she survives. This result, this conventionally sentimental "happy ending" is actually less convincing or memorable than the true climax of violence and retribution. A mob attacks the Prioress and, after lynching her, overruns the Capuchin church:

The rioters poured into the interior part of the building, where they exercised their vengeance upon everything which found itself in their passage . . . Some employed themselves in searching out the Nuns, Others in pulling down parts of the Convent, and Others again in setting fire to the pictures and valuable furniture, which it contained⁸⁵

This upheaval, which Lorenzo and his uncle Don Ramirez have--despite their own conventional respect for the Church--initiated, recalls the French Revolution (to English eyes, a catastrophe), and the way mobs stormed the Bastille, the symbol of hated royal authority.⁸⁶ It finds its echo in *Melmoth* in the conflagration which facilitates Moncada's escape from the Inquisition, just as the Prioress's demise is echoed in the even more grisly end which the parricide and renegade Monk, Moncada's confidante, fellow conspirator and eventual betrayer, meets at the hands of an outraged crowd.⁸⁷

The revolt signifies the urgency of what Malinowski calls the "new needs" of society. He claims that "no invention, no revolution, no social and intellectual change ever occurs except when new needs are created; and thus new devices in technique, in knowledge, or in belief are fitted into the cultural process or an institution".⁸⁸ The novel shows problems in societies undergoing great changes, but, paradoxically, Lewis sets his upheaval in a heavily fictionalized version of Spain, a society which had *not* undergone such changes, remaining (as English propaganda in fact depicted it) resolutely medieval.⁸⁹

For Lewis, transgression and rebellion are intimately linked--irrespective of the "moral high ground" that either may occupy. They are found not only in authoritarian religious and aristocratic circles, but also among the laity (servile, but capable of independent organization--albeit only as a mob). Thus, his portrayal of the conflict between sentimental culture and archaic feudalism and theocracy, and the effects of that conflict on the individual becomes a gleeful depiction of inevitable further, even more violent, disorder. Lewis revels in depictions of the chaotic and amoral. "Justice", for him, comes about by chance, or not at all. "Particular Providence" is almost absent from *The Monk*. The Gothic conventions of the supernatural are thereby themselves subverted. While the supernatural appears in *Otranto* as "divine wrath", in Lewis there is no such divine vengeance, only human retribution. God no longer truly exists. Instead, Satan and his agents are ever present. The gypsy's claim that Antonia will only find happiness "in a better world than this"⁹⁰ suggests agreement as to the world's corruption among almost all social groups, reflecting both the growing cynicism of Lewis's age (soon to find fuller expression in the Romantics) and Lewis's own misanthropy. His use of the uncanny, in the form of ghosts both guilty (the

Bleeding Nun) and innocent (Elvira) suggests that even the next world offers no *promise* of rest. Neither superstition nor the Protestant tradition can dispel the gloom. As Geary puts it "in *The Monk* . . . providence, secularized out of existence, leaves only unappeasable terror".⁹¹ The lack of this "divine existence" shows a less didactic or moralistic, more *nihilistic* side to Gothicism. In *Otranto* supernatural images are metonyms for the middle ages, and (pseudo-) medieval morality and faith assert themselves throughout the tale. Lewis abandons all pretence at adherence to the conventional view of religion in any age. Maturin reinstates certain Christian themes (but has to make use of extra- textual comments to do so) After Lewis, the secularization of the Gothic continues, through unorthodox use of supernatural devices, until in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* God and Satan completely vanish. Frankenstein and his Monster taking their roles. The medieval monastery and castle, inhabited by supernatural beings, are replaced by the positivist's laboratory.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III.

¹ Bronislaw Malinowski analyses culture as "an integral composed of partly autonomous, partly coordinated institutions", (Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Study of Culture* [New York: Oxford UP., 1960] 40) and states that "the problem of identity first has to be faced and solved", otherwise, this may create cultural "trait complex". Malinowski 31.

² Geary, indeed, contends that Gothic writers were not so much rebels against, as products of, their age.

³ Becker borrows this term from Professor Whitehead, who, Becker says, "has recently restored to circulation a seventeenth century phrase--"climate of opinion". The phrase is much needed, whether arguments command assent or not depends less upon the logic that conveys them than upon the climate of opinion in which they are sustained". Becker 5.

⁴ Once again, the word is used in its Kuhnian sense: the medieval world view had been "disproved" by the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, and yet Lewis revives it.

⁵ Baldick points out that since "Gothic fiction first emerged and established itself within the British and Anglo-Irish middle class. . . Gothic fiction is neither immemorial nor global, but belongs specifically to the modern age of Europe." (Baldick xiv-xv.) Hence, in *The Monk*, both the sentimental characters and anti-heroes are representations of individuals from the "modern age".

⁶ However, this is not to imply ineptitude on Maturin's part: William F. Axton calls this "nested" organisation "a conscious artistic device which serves . . . to organize the novel around implicit analogies of character and action." William F. Axton, Introduction, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, by Charles Maturin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961) xv.

⁷ Botting 2.

⁸ Interestingly, both are *women*: if the Prioress is taken to be Ambrosio's counterpart, and Matilda both his succubus and nemesis, then female villains outnumber the male, by four to one. There is a note of misogyny in *The Monk* which the purity of Marguarite, Agnes and

Antonia compounds, rather than redeems. In contrast, Maturin's depiction of Immalee, heavily indebted to the Rousseau-esque idea of the noble savage, is more chivalrous and Romantic than misogynist.

⁹ Walpole 7.

¹⁰ "Our conclusion could then be stated thus: an uncanny experience occurs when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed . . . We--or our primitive forefathers--once believed that these possibilities were realities, and were convinced that they actually happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have *surmounted* these modes of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation" Freud 370, 373.

¹¹ Even a maverick like Sterne, an Anglican clergyman of a distinctly worldly disposition, quoted one of his *own* sermons in *Tristram Shandy* to deplore the history of the Catholic Church, and the interjections of the Catholic character Dr. Slop are hardly reasonable: "examine the history of the Romish church;--(Well, what can you make of that? cried Dr Slop)--'see what scenes of cruelty, murder, rapines, bloodshed,' (They may thank their own obstinacy, cried Dr Slop.) 'have been sanctified by a religion not strictly governed by morality.'" Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967)152.

¹² This fear was not restricted to the English and Anglo-Irish "squirearchy"--the Gordon Riots of 1780 are ample illustration of *working class* concern over Catholic influence--but it underlay a great deal of sentimental writing, despite the ironic futility of fear of ultramontane tyranny, when England had a similar repressive state apparatus in Westminster.

¹³ Baldick xiv. In *Tristram Shandy*, this fear is given voice by Trim, one of Sterne's most sympathetic characters, whose brother Tom "went over a servant to Lisbon, --and then married a Jew's widow, who kept a small shop, and sold sausages, which, somehow or other, was the cause of his being taken in the middle of the night out of his bed, where he was lying with his wife and two small children, and carried directly to the Inquisition." (Sterne 140.) He reacts to Sterne's sermon thus: " 'To be convinced of this, go with me for a moment into the prisons of the Inquisition' --[God help my poor brother Tom]--'Behold *religion*, with *Mercy* and *Justice*

chained down under her feet, --there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propped up with racks and instruments of torment. Hark!--hark! what a piteous groan!' [Here Trim's face turned as pale as ashes.] 'See the melancholy wretch who uttered it,'--[Here the tears began to trickle down] 'just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of cruelty has been able to invent.' [D--n them all, quoth Trim, his colour returning into his face as red as blood.] . . . I fear, an' please your honours, all this is in Portugal, where my poor brother Tom is. I tell thee, Trim, again, quoth my father, ' `Tis only a description, honest man, quoth Slop, there's not a word of truth in it.--That's another story, replied my father.'" Sterne153-154.

¹⁴ Charles R. Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961) 264.

¹⁵ It should be noted here that this divorce between the domains and prerogatives of faith and reason is exactly what Kant, that pillar of the Enlightenment, urged--but in practice it led only to the two equally pernicious poles of watered-down, secular (even profane) "arid rationalism" of the crowd (and of the English public) and the blind unreasoning fanaticism of the Church itself.

¹⁶ See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976). In his chapter "Religious Affiliation and Social Stratification", Weber claims that religion should be understood as a cultural force. (Weber 35-46.)

¹⁷ Paul Langford, "The Eighteenth Century" (Morgan 387-392.)

¹⁸ Lewis 7.

¹⁹ Lewis 7.

²⁰ Lewis 7.

²¹ Lewis 7.

²² Jarret 11-12.

²³ Lewis 18.

²⁴ Ambrosio himself breaks the Second Commandment, in his veneration of a portrait of the Virgin. This is later revealed to have worse consequences than mere Mariolatry might, given the portrait's ambiguous identity. Since Matilda is the model, the object of veneration is--albeit unknown to Ambrosio--less an icon of the Divine, than an image of a latterday Lilith--or the Devil in human form.

²⁵ Lewis 19. Once again, Sterne provides a useful correlative: " See the bare-faced villain, how he cheats, lies, perjures, robs, murders.-- Horrid! -- But indeed, much better was not to be expected in the present case-- the poor man was in the dark!--his priest had got the keeping of his conscience;-- and all he would let him know of it was, That he must believe in the Pope;--go to Mass;--cross himself;--tell his beads;--be a good Catholic, and that this, in all conscience, was enough to carry him to heaven . . . if he robs,--if he stabs . . . (his conscience will) . . . be quite healed up by absolution. O Popery! what hast thou to answer for?" Lewis 146-147.

²⁶ Lewis 8.

²⁷ Lewis 17.

²⁸ Lewis 334.

²⁹ Geary 12-13.

³⁰ Geary 20.

³¹ Lewis 36.

³² Sage asserts ". . . when we speak of Protestant tradition, we are apparently speaking of a common set of doctrines which hold English culture together. There is an important sense in which theology is, by definition, conservative: it must preserve itself and its limits. To be a

social cement, it must be recognisable and it must transmit a set of values from generation to generation. This is true of both established and dissenting Protestantism." Sage xiii.

³³ Authority emphasises the numinous, unapproachable aspect of God, making the Deity at best a stern Old Testament Jehovah, and at worst, a Moloch. This cannot inspire people towards an Imitation of Christ; it can only cow them and rob them of pride in their humanity. Without synthesis, the two antithetical modes of existence become baneful: the laity are ignorant and venal, the Church hypocritical and exploitative.

³⁴ Sage refers to the outcome of Lewis's flouting of Anglican convention. Indirect, couched in ostensibly anti-Catholic fiction, it may have been, but "Blasphemy was a serious political charge at the time, and Lewis was a Member of Parliament. Papers were secretly drawn up against him, it seems, and he was forced to bowdlerise and censor his own text". (Sage xiv.) Likewise, Axton imputes the multiplicity and variety of narrative voices in *Melmoth* to a need to "protect the author, who had already suffered by a false identification with the blasphemous opinions of his characters, from the pious reader's imputation of heterodoxy". Axton xv.

³⁵ Indeed, eighteenth century fascination with such "improving" voyages was not confined to vicarious enjoyment of such texts. The "Grand Tour" around the Mediterranean (and later, the Ottoman territories) was sufficiently established as a pastime of the idle rich for Byron to recast such journeys in the form of "Beppo" and even the more obviously pseudo-medieval "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage".

³⁶ Thornburg argues that "Marriage became [in the eighteenth century] especially important as a means of consolidating the larger land holdings necessary to retain or increase wealth, since the system of inheritance had replaced traces of feudalism that political upheaval had effectively destroyed". Mary K. Patterson Thornburg, *The Monster in the Mirror* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1987) 16.

³⁷ Lewis 123. This passing reference to latent viciousness within one particular monk is also an implicit indictment of the Church's criteria in the selection of those considered to have a monastic vocation--as is much of the rest of the book!

³⁸ Lewis 126.

³⁹ Lady Lindenberg's attempted adultery and the marriages made for economic reasons suggest not the medieval world, but likewise the capitalistic eighteenth century. This phenomenon, in the novel, functions as a metaphor for the encroachment of a patriarchal *capitalist* system onto the institution of marriage.

⁴⁰ Lewis 143.

⁴¹ Lewis 156.

⁴² Lewis 156.

⁴³ See C.S.Lewis 84.

⁴⁴ Morrill, in Morgan 296-297.

⁴⁵ Since this burlesque is based on Lady Lindenberg's behavior alone, it savours of an illegitimate attack on personality, rather than beliefs, an *argumentum ad feminam* as it were--and one derived from a fictional character at that! However, dramatic license excuses what would be a very slender argument indeed in a more serious work.

⁴⁶ Baldick xiv.

⁴⁷ Botting 23.

⁴⁸ Lewis, importantly, negates the "psychological distancing" in medieval texts. Lewis's use of romance elements in itself neither glorifies nor condemns medieval times; by evoking the fears associated with the old, and by abolishing the psychological distancing between the "real" and "imaginary", he addresses more contemporary and universal problems, such as "marriage" and "sexuality".

⁴⁹ Lewis 11.

⁵⁰ Lewis 12.

⁵¹ Maturin does not follow Lewis here: In *Melmoth*, although there are some overtones of sexual deviance (the relation between the young monk and his novice) this is not perceived as the sole locus of danger. Rather, Maturin deals with sadistic and sadomasochistic joy in humiliation and torture.

⁵² Jarret's analysis of the marginalised (or elite) underside of "respectable" Victorian England provides ample evidence of the ultimate results of such sexual repression. (See Jarret 156-157) Naturally, however much of a prodigy Lewis was, it would be wholly unreasonable to attribute to him any kind of *consciousness* of his prescient status as a Gothic Cassandra--yet the coincidence of art's foreshadowing life in its depiction of a society's descent into perversion is compelling, and provides another reason for *The Monk's* enduring fascination.

⁵³ Thornburg argues (from a Jungian viewpoint) that the impact of old traditions, especially of the "courtly love" tradition, was still pervasive in eighteenth century society and still influenced individuals. She claims that "The disappearance of that tradition [courtly love], however forced the archetypes back, as it were, in the "real" world of the individuals. This being, in Jungian terms, an intolerable situation, a new dogma . . . was formed" (Thornburg 18.) The use of romance elements in the tale of Raymond satisfies that "need".

⁵⁴ Axton ix.

⁵⁵ Eternal perdition *may* be avoided. Even Ambrosio, the Devil intimates, has it in his power to attain salvation until his fateful contract. In fact, Satan urges Ambrosio to despair in a self-fulfilling prophecy which actively propels him into damnation. He admits, after the fateful signing, that this alone was necessary to bring his scheme to fruition. However, heaven may yet not admit the shades of the dead until the debts of this world are paid as the Bleeding Nun proves. The only mockery of the *Catholic* doctrine of *Purgatory* comes from the Prince of Lies. This implies that Lewis was *not* unsympathetic to a *purely* Catholic doctrine, despised by Protestants for its lack of Scriptural validation.

⁵⁶ Burke 17.

⁵⁷ Maturin 408.

⁵⁸ Axton ix-xii.

⁵⁹ Lewis 9.

⁶⁰ Lewis 39.

⁶¹ Lewis 39-40.

⁶² Lewis 237.

⁶³ Lewis 237.

⁶⁴ Lewis 237.

⁶⁵ Violence again stems from separation and isolation. The monk's abandonment by his mother at a very early age suggests the trauma that can result from alienation from one's roots. Likewise, eighteenth century society's estrangement from its medieval precursor--the "wellspring" of Western Civilisation rendered it unstable, a house built on sand.

⁶⁶ Lewis 223.

⁶⁷ Lewis 223. This *post hoc* self justification is of course remarkably similar to Matilda's later sophistry: guided by the heart's reasons alone, Ambrosio is willing to lose the scruples of which he was previously proud, just as Lady Lindenberg forgets her devotion to "duty" when *she* is charged with erotic passion. When Ambrosio determines to seduce Antonia, he is aware that "his attempts were highly criminal"(Lewis 257.) However, sexuality cannot be gainsaid by logic or by ethics. *The Monk's* characters always find ways to exonerate themselves, and surreptitiously justify their abandonment of earlier convictions.

⁶⁸ Lewis 235.

⁶⁹ Lewis 271.

⁷⁰ Lewis 235-236.

⁷¹ The consanguinity of these diametrically opposed characters allows Lewis to suggest that the root of *all* difference in character lies in education. Whereas for Walpole, parentage, "breeding," is important. Lewis allows no role for genetic heritage/inheritance in determining an individual's nature--the *nurturing* process is for him the primary source of psychology. Likewise, in *Melmoth* the theme of "nurture versus nature" is central. Hounded by his Abbott, Moncada almost goes mad--but presents himself to the Bishop with the following excuse for his dishevelled and raving appearance: "I am what they have made me." (Maturin 131) Moncada's brother Juan sides with him, only to incur their father's wrath. When the latter reproaches Juan's ingratitude, and accuses him of being a Demon, Juan bursts into delirious laughter: "And who has made me so? *He* who fostered my evil passions for his own purposes; and, because one generous impulse breaks out on the side of nature, would present or drive me mad, to effectuate his purposes". (Maturin 97-98.)

⁷² The magic glass of fairy tales turns into a magic mirror in *The Monk*: to achieve his goal, Ambrosio borrows from Matilda a mirror which Satan had given her: "She [Matilda] put the mirror into his hand. Curiosity induced him to take it, and Love, to wish that Antonia might appear. Matilda pronounced the magic words. Immediately a thick smoke rose . . . He beheld in a miniature Antonia's lovely form" (Lewis 271). The use of folk-tale *topoi* takes on a darker resonance here, comparable only to Beckford's more amoral *Vathek*.

⁷³ In Freudian terms, Matilda is a projection of Ambrosio's Ego--but such a reading remains partial if no attention is paid to the role of the Church as a malignant Super-Ego.

⁷⁴ See Susan Sontag, "Pornographic Imagination," *Styles of Radical Will* (London: Vintage, 1994) 37.

⁷⁵ Sonntag 38.

⁷⁶ Lewis 208.

⁷⁷ Lewis 441.

⁷⁸ Maturin 78.

⁷⁹ Maturin 85.

⁸⁰ Maturin 87.

⁸¹ Maturin 74.

⁸² The Catholic Church by this time could no longer conduct dialogue with advocates of rational philosophy, and no longer saw the need for any rational *apologia*. The Thomist dream of synthesising an Averroist interpretation of Aristotle with the philosophy of the Church Fathers had failed. Gothic literature is in many ways a *compendium* of such failed attempts at syncretism, as well as an indictment of successful but pernicious syntheses like the Industrial Age.

⁸³ Maturin 235.

⁸⁴ Lewis 21.

⁸⁵ Lewis 357.

⁸⁶ Burns 684.

⁸⁷ Axton insists that this parricide himself "epitomizes the psychological damage resulting from ecclesiastical despotism in his sadism, his nihilism, his hypocrisy, and his complex hatred of the faith of others . . . the parricide's murder at the hands of a mob prophesies the fate of an oppressively authoritarian religion and government before the pent-up outrage of a victimized

population." (Axton xvii.) However, his comment fails to acknowledge the oddly light-hearted manner in which Maturin treats this incident as an excuse for another interpolated anecdote.

⁸⁸ Malinowski 41.

⁸⁹ These changes are inevitable--the long political hegemony and psychological repression that the Church exercised over the Mediterranean world served only to *postpone* the French Revolution, a paradigmatic shift which had already occurred in England over the course of the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution.

⁹⁰ Lewis 38.

⁹¹ Geary 63.

CHAPTER IV

The Orphans of the Enlightenment:

Scientific Irresponsibility and Solitary Suffering

The influence of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has been immense; perhaps no work in the Gothic tradition has permeated more fully into the popular imagination. Though multifariously potent, and pliable in interpretation, the novel's theme is a simple one, consisting of the struggle between guilty creator and demonic creature. Having acquired arcane knowledge, Frankenstein aspires to the status of Demiurge, and the creation of a living being. Through hard work, and isolation from society and human contact he achieves this. The being, meanwhile, becomes progressively more and more alienated from his creator and his creator's society, eventually committing a series of hideous crimes. They finally confront each other, and the monster demands that Frankenstein create a mate for him. Frankenstein, however, refuses and the book concludes with the two of them locked in a process of mutual pursuit and conflict which leads to Frankenstein's death.

Although *Frankenstein* has become a text now virtually synonymous with Gothic, it deploys standard Gothic conventions sparingly, and indeed reorientates (or subverts) an already heterogeneous genre to make it the vehicle of themes deriving from the specific concerns of Romanticism. *Frankenstein* is considerably more sophisticated in construction than previous examples of horror fiction. Mary Shelley modifies and updates some of the conventional "classic" gothic elements of her predecessors: the medieval past, ruined abbeys, physically deformed beings, and passionate

hero-villains all contribute to her story, but all undergo a certain Romantic modification of interpretation. Since the novel takes its source material from the scientific advances and positivistic ideology of the age, and is set in the eighteenth century rather than the twelfth or sixteenth, the elements of previous works that recall the Middle Ages are replaced (or concealed) by modern equivalents: the passionate hero-villain is changed to a scientist; the labyrinthine castle to the labyrinths of laboratory work; the supernatural being, summoned from Hell, to the deformed Monster, created in a laboratory; and the ruined abbeys and tombs to the charnel houses and cemeteries from which Victor collects the body parts for his creation. By writing such a novel in an age in which science and technology were highly regarded as means of solving all human problems, Mary Shelley undermines the general optimism of that age, revealing the tragedy of the human condition against a confidently positivistic background. *Frankenstein* is a response not only to the dangerous progress of science, but also to a primarily rationalist and ambitious society which produces irresponsible, self-centered individuals who cause mischief both for themselves and others. The Monster's depredations give dramatic expression to this reproach to the scientific, economic, and familial mores of the eighteenth century¹.

Bhalla remarks that "The monstrous themes with which the Gothic writers preoccupied themselves were neither different from those employed by the political theorists and the radical poets nor separable from the various actions of repression and lawlessness in the daily political conduct of the age"² The Enlightenment and Industry created a society and individual constantly hungry for emoluments. Old values were being discarded.

However, instead of becoming the democratic utopia that Whigs (and Whig Historians)³ congratulated themselves on producing, society was becoming more oligarchic--a plutocracy euphemistically presented as a meritocratic ideal. The best of the Gothic texts, therefore, were written by people who saw themselves as social and intellectual radicals outside the structure of contemporary society or, as political and moral exiles from the "respectable" or "sentimental" order. Accordingly, Mary Shelley, like her predecessors, makes her work a critique of "sentimental" Augustan society and its culture. However, augmenting their literary devices with Romantic motifs, she draws an updated (and more three-dimensional) picture of the individual and society, emphasizing both the environmental and psychological antimonies in order to fully penetrate into the conflicts of her age. She adapts the Gothic genre both to her positivistic century and to its prevailing literary school: the Romantic movement (itself a reaction *against* positivism). The Romantics tried to find the defining essence of man and his place in the universe by exiling themselves from contingent (and unjust) socio-political structures. They saw themselves as outcasts, as homeless wanderers in a vulgar and brutal debasement of the commonweal, in which reason itself threatened the health and integrity of the individual and the community.⁴ However, *Frankenstein* is a work ostensibly *in* the scientific, rational tradition; Mary Shelley adopts the terminology of science and positivism the better to indicate the catastrophe that rationalism can bring about. Her Romantic background informs her dislike of the current materialistic system. The novel is a Romantic response to those socio-economic and socio-political developments which, in the nineteenth century, created a new and brutal morality for an industrial economy: a morality which in downplaying

compassion, weakened individuals' ties both with each other and with society. *Frankenstein* thus stands as a critique of the society and of the individual type created by the Industrial and Scientific Revolutions. ("Mary Shelley was quite familiar with and sensitive to the actual conditions in England".)⁵ She suggests that the dominant values in that society are not only artificial, but inconsistent, or hypocritical. Through the three central figures: Robert Walton, the credulous sentimental (or Romantic) adventurer; Victor Frankenstein, the industrious, but ethically irresponsible man of the age; and Frankenstein's creation, the Monster, an artificial, semi-human experiment, she suggests the various (but equally disastrous) paths along which the self-conscious but hypocritical modernists of the industrial age might "progress". Through the struggle between guilty creator and warped creature, the novel explores the perverse aspects of personal identity, shaped in an industrial, competitive social structure. The novel addresses both the process of ethical or psychological degeneration in its characters, and the values of a society which channels their "potential energies" into disruptive directions.

There is, however, less emphasis on wilful opportunistic villainy in *Frankenstein* than in previous Gothic novels; Mary Shelley aims not only at portraying malevolence and sadism, but also at analysing those mental defects, such as solipsism and paranoia, which could only thrive in an insensitive scientific and industrialized milieu. She suggests that the utilitarian drive springs from, and reinforces, a corrupt, or corrupting force inherent in human nature. This "fantasy" of Mary Shelley is a Romantic response to the problem of, and a Romantic search for the root of, evil in the individual and in society. A less historicist, more *psychological* reading of

the text is, then, neither entirely anachronistic nor inappropriate. More rationally and dispassionately than the Romantics could, Mary Shelley strips away the "super-ego" of "sentimental culture" to analyse the core that constructs the *self* in a society whose positivistic and materialistic codes determine both culture and personality. She acknowledges the existence of a primordial potential energy in human nature, and a desire to *define* the self. However, culturally determined values give shape to this energy, and she sees *ambition* as the dominant value of the age. This underlines her account of Frankenstein's construction of a self or two selves⁶, his and the Monster's, since Victor defines *himself*, as much as the Monster, through the "pleasurable process" and then the "painful results" of "creation". She implies that such ambition, if unchecked, can lead only to evil. Even constituting a self means internal conflict; man loses his unconscious unity and opens his eyes to an unknown universe which he struggles in vain to define.⁷ This conclusion, naturally, makes the novel a more *sombre* work than any of its Gothic predecessors. There is no room here for wit, or burlesque. Victor's wanderings hardly constitute a contribution to the picaresque genre, and the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of the central character leave little cause for mirth. While there is a theme of *parody*, in which gender roles play a part, these are far from being the entertaining inversions of gender which they are in *Udolpho* and *The Monk*. *Frankenstein* is unrelentingly bleak.

Mary Shelley introduces a new method of narration in *Frankenstein*: the multiple (or "nested") narrative voice which will also be used by Charles Maturin in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, shortly after, but with rather less success

and cohesion. Of the three narratives in the story, Frankenstein's is enclosed inside Robert Walton's, and the Monster's own account of his tale inside Frankenstein's. All three stories exhibit the uneasy and dangerous coexistence of opposing sentiments in Mary Shelley's age. The "framed" narratives facilitate a progression from naiveté to pure intellect, which eventually becomes a destructive force. Furthermore, the use of *emboitement* achieves two other, more literary, ends. First, it gradually increases the suspense, the feeling of unresolved tension in the story. Second, the "common sense" way in which Walton concludes the novel creates an impression of verisimilitude and authenticity, lending credence to the fanciful occurrences described. This is significant, since Victor alone is not a reliable narrator. His presence, character and story are plausible only when filtered through the perception of a "sentimental" narrator. Walton's narrative allows the rational reader to accept Frankenstein, his story, and the Monster as true.⁸ By using the common sense narrator at the beginning and at the end, Mary Shelley builds a bridge between the positivist world view of her age and the abstract impressions of the tale itself.

Robert Walton, the would-be romantic, conveys, through his narrative, the naiveté of a "commonsensical" or "sentimental" approach to life. He is an exemplary exponent of the degree of importance to be attached to familial ties and social responsibilities. Although Robert acts out the conventionally Romantic role of a lonely, wandering spirit, his devotion to the earlier convention of sentimental values is suggested through the letters he writes to his sister, Mrs. Saville. The "anti-sentimental" side of the age is expressed by Frankenstein's own narrative. He, having turned against the values which informed his own upbringing, is revealed as both the

irresponsible "other" and as *product* of his age. Frankenstein, the romantic *entrepreneur* whose philanthropic schemes, after the creation of the Monster, turn into nightmare, embodies two different aspects of industrial bourgeois society. With his desire to do good (and the resulting high acclaim and exalted social status which public recognition of his achievement brings) he represents the "enlightened" virtues of his society. His "deviant" research and its unforeseen catastrophic consequences, on the other hand, epitomize the folly or *hamartia* of nineteenth century Western Europe. Throughout the novel Mary Shelley explores the reasons for such deviation, the Monster's narrative being her strongest and most overt critique of a society which has become so deviant. His tale, vacillating between self-loathing and reproach, reveals rather more than his own literal monstrosity. It also makes plain that he is the victim of the schism between sentiment (or faith) and pragmatism (or science). He is the *isolated*, pathetic residue of his culture's selfish social and individual pursuits, as well as an emblem of the disrupted psychology of Victor Frankenstein himself.

The story begins and ends with letters from Walton (a sea captain who is looking for the unknown and paradisaical in the Polar regions of the north) to his sister. The first three letters are imbued with the imprudent optimism of the eighteenth century--the belief in the glory of existence, even if it be a solitary but noble struggle against vicissitude and death. All seems glorious, but only because any reflection upon the complexities of human existence and psychology is entirely absent. Bound for the port of Archangel to assemble a crew, Walton is inspired by the cold northern wind to envision a perfectly warm and radiant paradise existing at the summit of the globe where "the sun is forever visible; its broad disk just skirting the

horizon, and diffusing perpetual splendour".⁹ Walton brims over with illogical optimism. The key words in his letters (such as "capture heavens", "summit", "paradise", "wondrous power") betray his motives. Robert's search for the unattainable seems awkward, even childish; he does not know what he really wants or expects from this voyage:

I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man. These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death, and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks on a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river.¹⁰

He is aware that his soul is restless, but he is not aware that his search is, in fact, internally oriented: towards finding or constituting a "self" for himself outside the strictures of society, and employing the power of that self to find out the secrets of nature. There is something both impressive and naive in this romantic adventurer's quest for identity or for the power to create (or recapture) a place for himself. Importantly, he does not look within himself for such an apotheosis. From his letters, it can be deduced that he is trying to overcome fears which he could not face in social life. Hence, to compensate for the lacuna in his culturally determined personality, he tries to situate himself within a divine locus. His "idyll", ambiguously, is to be found in a place which is both the *edge* of the world (and therefore marginal), and the world's *centre*, or well-spring of existence--both Eden and Hellenic *omphalos*.¹¹ Its allure is understandable, therefore, even as Walton's monomania is not. The bleak, *blank* lifeless splendour of the polar

regions appears to have been a persistent reproach to the Gothic and Romantic imagination: throughout later Gothic writing, authors sought to locate life, whether prehistoric, mutant, or extraterrestrial, within the Arctic or Antarctic.¹² Mary Shelley, however, makes it plain that Walton's confidence is misplaced: no amount of exploration or circumnavigation will change his life since he is evading the more central issue of inner growth. His search can be explained, in Freudian terms, as the division of the personality into Conscious and Unconscious--he is driven (by something he barely understands) in search of gratification.

The introduction of Frankenstein and his story in the fourth letter, presents a more sombre aspect of existence, and a note of pure Gothic horror is sounded. Romanticism had its morbid side, taking inspiration from the Graveyard Poets just as early gothicism had done, and Mary Shelley makes much of Frankenstein's narrative a disquisition on the ultimate reality of death (or defeat). This invokes dread; it contaminates and undermines the utopian dreams which were to characterise the nineteenth century. With Victor Frankenstein's arrival on Robert's ship, the visions of glory and the mood of optimism depart. The description of the miserable Frankenstein and of the melancholy that pervades him bring a reminder that dreams and quests can leave their pursuers broken, rather than leading to apotheosis. Walton's account of the stranger's first appearance dwells on his forlorn mien:

His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition . . . But he is generally melancholy and

despairing; and sometimes he gnashes his teeth, as if impatient of the weight of woes that oppress him.¹³

He is nevertheless wise and gentle. He seems to have received a proper education since he speaks with eloquence, though seldom uttering a word. His weariness does not deceive Robert: "Such a man has a double existence: he may suffer misery, and be overwhelmed by disappointments; yet when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit . . ."¹⁴ Such a double existence, or coexistence of mutually contradictory elements within one personality, would imply the presence of latent energies within an apparently dormant spirit. Indeed, such energies may be smouldering within an age (or culture) as within a man. However, the question remains as to whether those energies, once released, are truly celestial--or infernal.

Robert, attracted by the stranger's intellectual sophistication, finds in him a kindred spirit, and talks about his enterprise, only to see "a dark gloom spread over [his] listener's countenance".¹⁵ Frankenstein is indeed galvanised, but only to rebuke: "Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught?"¹⁶ Frankenstein sees in Walton his early, inexperienced sentimental self: Robert, with the potential within him to do harm, is following the same catastrophic path as he himself had done. In disclosing his story to Walton, Frankenstein emphasises the dangers inherent in pride and ambition. He gives an account of his early interest in alchemy, his rebellion against his father's authority, and his mother's death. He then explains how, in the hope of perfecting mankind, he created a being in his laboratory: a being who later became an evil force and destroyed members of Frankenstein's family, his best friend, and his wife. In

wandering in the North pole, he says, he is hunting the Monster down. By destroying him, he hopes to make good his error.

The narratives of both Robert Walton and Victor Frankenstein start from their early childhood explaining how their past, and the norms of their society (their familial milieu) shaped their present. Walton's questing nature, as understood from his narrative, is not innate, but circumstantially created. Motherless, he reached adulthood highly affected by the masculine company of his uncle, whose library of adventure stories was his early reading. Victor, however, belongs to a higher social class: his father was a syndic, and what Frankenstein tells Walton (and the reader) about his upbringing is a perfect illustration of sentimental roles and values which he did not choose to challenge till the death of his mother.¹⁷ Frankenstein's potential energies are not even channelled into the more conventional direction which Walton's have taken. The release of energy occurs when Victor is an adult, and after the values of the sentimental culture have been fully inculcated in him. When he loses his mother, the strictures of his society vanish. He *belongs* nowhere. Dissatisfied with himself and his lot, he *externalises* a longing for life: he determines to create a new happy and prosperous species through science. Unlike Walton he does not become a lonely, melancholic drifter, but chooses to stay in society and *mould* it. In fact, he attempts to create another image of himself, which will be happy, but he fails in this. However, like Walton's, his creation, too, is his other self. The Monster's hatred of society, its sentimental codes, and his own existence, it is suggested, are Frankenstein's own hatreds. Hence, Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the Monster become the negative "others" of their sentimental society.

The situations of all three recall, to some extent, those of the legendary Wandering Jew, (as used previously in Gothic fiction) and Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*. Mary Shelley concurs with Coleridge's view that there is an innate evil in human nature waiting to be triggered by the appropriate circumstance. In *The Ancient Mariner* Coleridge suggests that man has the power to destroy both his environment and himself. The catastrophes the mariners in the poem suffer follow the wanton shooting of an albatross. Walton's promise that he "shall kill no Albatross"¹⁸ is a reference not only to sailors' superstition, but directly to Coleridge's work. Frankenstein, however, has already symbolically shot *his* Albatross, spurred on to this act by the prevailing opportunist and competitive ethos of his industrial (and industrious) society.

The symbol of the wanderer is for Mary Shelley, as for Maturin and Lewis, always the Romantic "other", outside the sentimental, and the settled. He is an exile, ostracised or under anathema, and thereby both anti-hero, according to the strictures of society, and hero, possessed of a dynamic independence. As Punter explains,

The wanderer is hero and / or victim. He is usually possessed of supernatural powers, often the gift of reading the future . . . his task on earth is to find another person who, out of despair, would exchange destinies with him, a task in which he never succeeds . . . He is the living demonstration of divine vengeance.¹⁹

This defines the later Gothic anti-hero Melmoth perfectly. Like him, and like the *Ancient Mariner*, Frankenstein sins. Like the Wandering Jew, condemned to wander the earth until Judgment Day, he is doomed to a life

of perpetual exile. Like the characters of Aeschylus or Sophocles, he is accounted *responsible* (and thus deserving of punishment) despite the *inevitable* nature of his destiny. Frankenstein's guilt, the efficient cause of his downfall, resides in his attempt to acquire the knowledge, and hence the creative power, of the gods, but the *material cause* is his own psychology and culturally determined attitudes. His breach of faith with custom and morality allows of no repentance, unlike the venial sins of previous Gothic characters like Manfred or Ambrosio.²⁰ When he finds Walton, he urges him to kill the Monster; "If I do [die], swear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape; that you will seek him and satisfy my vengeance in his death".²¹ Thus he attempts to enlist Walton in his desperate and belated attempt to shoulder some of his responsibilities. Passive (or even parasitical) to the end, he seeks to involve the mariner in his own destiny. Failing in this he dies, unavenged, while Walton survives.

In using a character like Walton, who tries to reach the summit of his desires (or to make a meaning out of nothing in the *indifferent* polar regions) Mary Shelley reinforces her theme of the human urge to *belong*. Whether in society or in the world of nature, the desire for a *home* jostles uncomfortably with the urge to confront the raw stuff of existence and *challenge* the apportionment of set roles for the individual. This yearning of Walton is a very Romantic one.²² Shelley (in "Ode to the West Wind" and in "Prometheus Unbound") Byron (in "Manfred") disclose this same vigorous aspiration to become "autonomous man, independent of the authority of society or any external power".²³ Robert wants to be godlike, yet he cannot comprehend the burden of that power. His naive unconsciousness recalls the untutored and uncultured side of young

Frankenstein--and the crude yearnings of the young Romantics. Mary Shelley's own Romanticism is more self conscious and less impulsive.

Victor Frankenstein's own field of study is hardly, on the surface, a Romantic or impulsive one either. He *appears* at first, as a pragmatic man of science and industry, to have neither mystical nor metaphysical leanings. Accordingly, in his tale neither Walton nor the reader are required to tacitly accept the existence of the supernatural. There is no place in *Frankenstein* for Satan, who provides the *deus* (or *diabolus*) *ex machina* in *The Monk*, nor for agents of Providence like Alfonso, the spirit who defies physical constraint in *The Castle of Otranto*.²⁴ Nor are there medieval castles to embody the persistence of the feudal order in the story²⁵, yet there is an effective medieval *scholastic* motif: Frankenstein's early interest in alchemy.

Frankenstein studies chemistry at the University of Ingolstadt. The background Mary Shelley gives her protagonist reflects the greatly increased interest in chemistry during her own time: "Probably the greatest theoretical breakthrough made in the second half of the eighteenth century lay in the field of chemistry . . ."²⁶ Victor, however, deviates from the limited positivistic principles of chemistry; he also makes use of an older and less responsible "pseudo-science": alchemy²⁷. This, the "chemistry" of the middle ages, concerned primarily with attempts to transmute base metals into gold, constitutes the core of a *forbidden* corpus of knowledge.²⁸ The modern science retained its older alchemical associations even for the readers of Mary Shelley's own age, and so Victor's conflation of the two fields seems quite plausible, from the theoretical viewpoint. However, there is an ethical (or theological) dimension to Frankenstein's work. It not only

stands, *mutatis mutandis*, for sorcery, but is depicted as a continuation of that tradition. The use of magic is what the assiduous Frankenstein is after.²⁹ Victor's scientific (or alchemical) curiosity is born of a reaction against received opinions on the supremacy of empiricist principles, and also, importantly, parental disapproval of such study. His father's expression of contemptuous impatience "My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this",³⁰ provokes him to assert independence of his father's authority³¹--and eventually to abnegate his other responsibilities as well. Victor shares the alchemists' rebellion against the established religious and scientific authority of his time. Although he is ironically depicted as a modern scientist, his fascination with the works of Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus³² betrays him as an alchemist *manque*. He does not work within the limits of the physical world, but makes use of modern methods only to possess occult (or divine) secrets. Victor begins with a desire for knowledge for its own sake: a desire simply to rise above the ignorance which was held, even in the positivistic age, to be the human condition:

While my companion contemplated with a serious and satisfied spirit the magnificent appearances of things, I delighted in investigating their causes. The world was to me a secret which I desired to divine. Curiosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness akin to rapture, as they were unfolded to me, are the earliest sensations I can remember.³³

Victor's account of his early years reveals a consuming ambition to penetrate the veil of appearance: "It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; whether it was the outward substance of things, or the inner spirit of

nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my inquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or, in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world".³⁴ This then leads to a wish to ameliorate the human condition, a universal "philanthropic" urge. However, this desire, appropriate to (and praiseworthy in) his sentimental culture, provokes him into a hubris equally appropriate to the scientific age: he attempts to *perfect* the human *race*. He leaves his colleagues behind within the limits of materialistic, or positivist science, while he relies upon an older (and possibly blasphemous) tradition. His emulation of Paracelsus and Agrippa, and English figures such as Dr. Dee,³⁵ whose peregrinations in Europe are mentioned in *Melmoth*,³⁶ make Victor a Faustian figure. As Melmoth has eaten from "the interdicted tree"³⁷, so has Frankenstein attempted to acquire knowledge proscribed by the Church. Dressing up his egotistic ambition in the euphemistic terms of altruistic zeal, he can only be a hypocritical *parody* of the Creator whose role he apes, or usurps. Thereby, his researches lose any validity as a means towards the betterment of society, and become gratuitous--as indeed many scientific projects from the Industrial Revolution onwards have seemed. As Frankenstein confesses to Walton, his aspirations ironically led to the creation of a demon and caused the deaths of many people. Medieval "science", it is implied, is "deviant"--thus, it would seem, it can only produce monstrosities.³⁸

However, Mary Shelley shows that although the methods used are medieval, the impetus is typically "progressive", or Augustan. Victor is fascinated by the possibility of harnessing the great powers of nature like "the dazzling light that vanish the oak tree"³⁹. His "virtual mania of applying scientific method in studying nature"⁴⁰ was the norm among

educated gentlemen of his age. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, aristocrats and middle class people devoted themselves to scientific research and "The accomplishments of the scientific revolution inspired a deep sense of assurance that scientific method was the only valid means for pursuing research in all areas of human inquiry".⁴¹ However, untrammelled by ethical (or spiritual) considerations, such "progress" led to social and individual dysfunction.⁴² The notion that science could solve all human problems was a dangerous one, and Mary Shelley indicts such blind faith in technology--but not by castigating science's pernicious *innovations*. Rather, she sees modern science as a synthesis of older traditions: a hybrid drawing upon much of what was *worst* in previous paradigms.

Victor's decision to attempt the creation of life echoes, and indeed surpasses, the wider ambitions of science after the Industrial Revolution. Victor, never satisfied with what he has, sees himself as fated for great deeds. He does not and cannot enjoy a real childhood, but approximates to the cultured, teleological motivation of the adult world. Even as a child, he sounds like a perfect empiricist and utilitarian, aiming only at those pragmatic, "improving" goals approved by society. However, Victor's conception of the metaphysical is so materialist as to be attenuated, amoral, and riddled with "false consciousness" concerning spiritual values. It is subservient to the physical, his "highest sense". Refusing to acknowledge either the futility or inappropriateness of human efforts towards full comprehension of that "highest sense", he devotes himself to its study.

However, this quest for knowledge is only fully articulated after the death of his mother. The shock of bereavement cannot be alleviated by sentimental conventions of mourning.⁴³ Instead Frankenstein becomes

obsessed by the paradoxical notion that the purpose of life is after all death, and the purpose of death is life. In bestowing life on lifeless matter he aims to "renew life where death had devoted the body to corruption". This thought motivates him to "pursue nature to her hiding places"⁴⁴ He determines to defy death (putting him in the company of Melmoth) through possession of knowledge (putting him in the company of Faust).

The outcome of Frankenstein's research, however, is literally monstrous: he creates a deformed being, who, upon realising his abnormality and his rejection by human society, becomes his creator's enemy. The presence of a deformed creature in the novel provides an allegorical critique of the nineteenth century's *idée fixe* in which man is a familial, economic, and political unit. Hence, the Monster is the most desentimentalised, defamiliarised figure in the novel. He is an antithesis of modern humanity: he is not England's *social* "other", like the representatives of Catholic societies found in earlier Gothic novels, but rather, implies more universal physical and psychological "others". However, he, too, embodies the residue of medievalism--or superstitious fears. In his constitution there are traces of the ancient--the alchemy, and the body parts of the dead. He is another hybrid, but not a successful fusion: the constituent elements of his anatomy and psychology are mutually incompatible and bound to make him both repository and cause of tension.

The detailed description of the process by which the Monster is created illuminates the unacknowledged (and occult) reality of life's origins. In true Gothic tradition, he is a representation of death's presence within its antithesis, life. The legacy of decay imbues the Monster with the appearance less of something created, than of something that, after decaying, has

regained life⁴⁵ The creature, in fact, is a metaphor for its own model: this deformed, necromantic assemblage of body parts, created in a laboratory, is an inversion of its more natural template--it seems to have been turned inside out, with visible muscles and arteries. This itself is a powerful image--perhaps more so than the body's patchwork appearance. In *Otranto*, Alfonso is likewise "reassembled" (albeit in a rather more dignified, awe-inspiring manner than Frankenstein's bricolage of off-cuts), but the alarming size of the helmet causes consternation even before such reconstruction is apparent. The assembling of the gigantic suit of armour evokes dread principally due to an incongruity of *size*, with the familiar form of the human body rendered strange by its alien proportions. Here, in contrast, *topology* is the key to the Monster's surreal menace. The unsettling aspect of this construction is that it openly, obscenely (in its literal sense), reveals the hitherto occult power of life. A ghastly picture of the unseen bodily functions of man is drawn. Even Victor fears his own creation:

His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!-Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but this luxuriance only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same color as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips.⁴⁶

As soon as the Monster comes to life, Frankenstein turns against him purely on the grounds of unnatural or grotesque *physical appearance* (a prejudice exhibited also by the De Lacey family whom the monster later

befriends.) The Monster is a concrete but, at the same time, a miraculous construction, and before Frankenstein bestows life on it, appears to him to be in proportion, and even beautiful. But when the Monster "wakes up" from his pre-existent slumber, all his beauty disappears. This metamorphosis (or Frankenstein's subjective *reassessment* of his creature's nature) suggests the hostile reaction that the recurrence of antecedent traditions could provoke in the proponents of sentimental ideals. The "abnormality" Frankenstein observes in his creation is caused by the overt expression of something secretly familiar to him: the visibility of the eerie power of life, or the "physical" in a different sense: the fleshly "other", which pious, prudish, sentimental Anglicans affected to scorn. These physical and psychological "others" in *Frankenstein* represent the anti-sentimental, and therefore rejected (or marginalised) truths and realities of previous myths, and also remind the reader of a lacuna within Mary Shelley's own culture. An unacknowledged need within the culture to deal with unpalatable aspects of reality leads to misunderstanding, misprision and conflict.⁴⁷ Victor's rejection of his creation is the manifestation of his self-consciously sentimental psychology.

Although there are no beleaguered maidens in *Frankenstein* in the conventional sense, there *are* a number of helpless and vulnerable characters. First and foremost among them is the Monster himself. When the circular narrative passes on to him, Frankenstein's story is recapitulated from the point of view of the "born innocent".⁴⁸ The creature has no self-perception at first, and it is only when he sees his own reflection that his self-awareness begins.⁴⁹ Gradually comprehending his ugliness and the reason people hate him, the Monster laments,

. . . but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sense of despondence and mortification.⁵⁰

When he discovers his true origin from the papers he took from Frankenstein's laboratory, this despondence turns to fury: "hateful day when I received life . . . Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster that even *you* turned from me in disgust?"⁵¹ He questions both the purpose of his existence and the intentions of his creator. Fleeing to a hovel next to the cottage of the De Lacey family, he tries to disguise his true nature by communicating directly only with the blind old father. If Victor's abandonment of his creation is in fact a metaphor for all those ruinous Enlightenment and Industrialization processes which left the poor, the needy, the destitute outside the "formal" social structure, in portraying the De Lacey family, Mary Shelley has no need of metaphor.⁵² Rather, she utilises the Monster's status of a naif the better to convey a realisation of the family's unfortunate situation. At first he is confused at their "sadness and despondency"⁵³ and finds his own misery more justified than theirs: "If such lovely creatures were miserable, it was less strange that I, an imperfect and solitary being, should be wretched. Yet why were these gentle beings unhappy? They possessed a delightful house (for such it was in my eyes) and every luxury; they had a fire to warm them . . ."⁵⁴ Finally his ingenuousness (or Mary Shelley's disingenuousness) is removed: he "discover[s] one of the causes of the uneasiness of this amiable family: it

was poverty; and they suffered that evil in a very distressing degree."⁵⁵ By observing the family, the Monster becomes familiar with the idea of domesticity and filial devotion in adversity, and indeed he, like his absent creator, tries to exercise philanthropy by providing the De Lacey's with food, in the hope that they might learn to love him as a benefactor. However, De Lacey's children see only the creature's hideous appearance, and are repelled. Their violent reaction, which the Monster interprets as both ingratitude and rejection, precipitates the innate evil in his nature.

The Monster grows in self-awareness and completes his education by reading (appropriately, if not altogether plausibly) Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This is not merely a dramatic device (although it is, in its own way, as gratuitous a form of anagnorisis as the belated explanations given to Manfred by Jerome, or to Ambrosio by Satan). In Milton's epic, Romantics and writers of Gothic alike found a version of the Christian myth of creation suitable to their tastes. Rather than dwelling on Satan's evil, it makes Lucifer a figure of some dignity: certainly a figure as deserving of awe--and sympathy--as the cthonic Titans of Greek mythology. It also recounts the catastrophe of consciousness (the self unable to bear the self) and the conflict between creator and creature. As Bloom remarks "Satan's despair is absolute because Satan, as pure spirit, is pure consciousness, and for Satan (and for all men in his predicament) every increase in consciousness is an increase in despair".⁵⁶ Having grown in tormenting consciousness, Milton's Satan is cast out of heaven just as Prometheus is expelled from Olympos. Prometheus stole fire from heaven and brought it to men, thus blurring the distinction between man and gods. For this transgression, he incurs the terrible punishment of perpetual torture. The analogies with the Judeo-

Christian myth of the Fall, the eating of the fruit that confers knowledge of good and evil, and the resultant expulsion from Paradise, are inescapable. The complete title of the novel-- *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*-- makes its theme explicit: it is the retelling of the acquisition of a knowledge hitherto prohibited to mankind. The Promethean myth, and Miltonic rebellion, attracted the more extravagant romantics like Shelley and Byron, both of whom wrote of Prometheus, the rebel, suffering for his transgression. It was from Byron ⁵⁷ and Shelley that Mary Shelley took this primary romantic theme in her novel. The Romantics themselves took from Milton the conception of the Devil as a rebellious Romantic anti-hero.⁵⁸

The monster reads Milton's epic as if it were the "true history" of an omnipotent God warring with His creatures; he sees the world through the filter of Adam's and Satan's voices. He first identifies himself with Adam, sees him as a "perfect creature, happy and prosperous".⁵⁹ When he realizes that he himself is *not* perfect and does *not* come from the same omnipotent God, he understands that he is an abandoned child, a parentless orphan; he then identifies himself with Satan.⁶⁰ The resemblances between Mary Shelley's demon and Milton's Satan are, indeed, striking. The Monster, too, suffers from the consciousness of his situation as an outcast. Like Satan, he is exiled from his creator and his creator's society. However, unlike Satan, he is also *alone* and abandoned through no fault of his own. It is in these terms, themselves blasphemous were it not for the Miltonic (rather than Biblical) metaphor that Mary Shelley places in his mouth, that the Monster reproaches Frankenstein:

I am thy creature: I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed.

Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.⁶¹

This association of happiness with virtue is important: the Monster has also read a classical account of warfare, and while recoiling in horror at descriptions of carnage, acknowledges that, with a different upbringing, he too might have delighted in the martial life. This reinforces the emphasis placed on *nurture*: the monster knows himself to be Locke's *tabula rasa*, susceptible of moulding by society, and by his "parent". Frankenstein has it within his power to inculcate virtue in his "child", but instead, having *given* life to a being, he has fled from his responsibilities; *left* the innocent "baby" he created. The Monster demands *acknowledgement*, if not from society, then at least from Frankenstein. The mutual pursuit and conflict between Frankenstein and the Monster is a tragedy of misapprehension: it disguises an attempt to reunite with the *semblable*, the other self. Through engagement with his creator, the Monster, in fact seeks further humanizing; he, too, tries to reestablish a harmony of sorts. He reminds the scientist of his responsibilities as creator or father, Frankenstein's abjuration of such responsibility leading the Monster to reason that he owes Victor no filial respect--and, indeed, that Victor's own right to any kind of familial happiness is thereby forfeit.

Gothicism, in the hands of Mary Shelley, could reassert its suitability as a vehicle for rebuke to a class or classes whose members, certain of their place in society, congratulated both themselves *and* their society on progressing inexorably towards higher forms of civilized order and a greater degree of rational control, while conveniently forgetting those *left out* and

marginalised. Victimisers are themselves victimised in the novel; if the Monster is an orphan (or contemporary "sans culottes") then he thereby acquires, paradoxically, a far more powerful status than the dispossessed bandits of *Udolpho* and *Otranto*. Thus begins a solitary crusade of extermination waged by the Monster, directed against the sentimental characters both from personal spite and from hatred of their virtues and values.

His choice of victims is not arbitrary. He targets the relatives and confidantes of his creator. Victor's little brother, William is his first victim. Then follows Justine, the servant girl of the Frankenstein family, unjustly accused of William's murder and so executed. The Monster then demands that Victor create a *female* counterpart, to provide him with the company and solace that society has denied him: "My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects"⁶² At first Victor agrees, but later fears assail him: the Monster's mate might, he fears, "become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate"⁶³ or the creatures "might even hate each other";⁶⁴ or--worst of all-- "one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth".⁶⁵ Moved by fears that "future ages might curse me as their pest",⁶⁶ Frankenstein destroys the half-completed female Monster. Meanwhile, he goes ahead with his *own* marriage plans. By marrying Elizabeth (who will tame him and draw him back into the sentimental culture which has refused admission to the Monster) Victor changes sides: he chooses to become a good bourgeois character and tries to alienate himself from his other, anti-sentimental self. This the Monster (that disdained other self) cannot allow: the Monster kills Elizabeth.

This chain of victims, starting with the most innocent, is to end with Frankenstein himself, dying raving at the North Pole. Frankenstein falls a victim, albeit indirectly, to his own sentimentality.⁶⁷ He has acted in accordance with the expectations and dictates of his culture, in his choice of career and his devotion to a practical ambition. However, he has deviated from the path of legitimate research in his deliberate creation of the Monster. This abnegation of responsibility is only *compounded* by his rejection of his "progeny". Furthermore, it seems that this callousness is only an extreme example of a more general inability to deal with other human beings properly, or respect their autonomy. Scientist he may be, but he is, in terms of practical involvement with humanity's concerns, little better than an "*idiot savant*", autistic (or even solipsistic) in his obsession. Possessiveness lies behind his greed for power and knowledge. This in itself does not contradict the expectations of society, but his selfishness prevents him from living up to other expectations: his familial and conjugal duties, and the quasi-parental responsibility of creation. Victor's obsession stops him from being the good son and loving husband that he claims to have been, and yet he cannot treat the Monster as anything other than a misbegotten botched experiment to be discarded in chagrin and wounded "professional" pride. He rejects the Monster, a living, sentient and passionate being. Thus, panic-stricken, he abjures the dark, unhealthy (or anti-sentimental) side of his personality. Yet it persists, unacknowledged, emerging in the Monster's depredations, threatening the sentimental tradition which has formed Victor's own personality.

Frankenstein's narration is, in fact, an account of perversion in the development of his consciousness, and the acknowledgement of his baser,

more selfish urges. Unhealthy or dysfunctional emotions, as inculcated by a materialist and hypocritical society, were also a conventional gothic element.⁶⁸ Mary Shelley dwells on the possessiveness of the characters, revealing this as another form of hypocrisy engendered by "Sentimental culture". Even as a child Frankenstein had a possessive character, reinforced by the responsibility towards Elizabeth with which his mother charges him. Elizabeth is first brought home and presented to him by his mother as a "gift". His interpretation of this is quite literal: "And when, on the morrow, she presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift, I, with childish seriousness, interpreted her words literally, and looked upon Elizabeth as mine--mine to protect, love and cherish."⁶⁹ Thus, a human relationship is portrayed in terms of acquisition.⁷⁰

All the sentimental victims show signs of such possessiveness, a respectable failing, rooted in familial power relations. Even in his heretical creation of the Monster Frankenstein cannot help but imitate sentimental parental roles, first his mother's, then his father's. Frankenstein assumes (or parodies) the role of the mother, revealing his hopeful, motherly feelings just before bestowing life on the creature. Later, however, Victor, like his father, denies the Monster female company, as his father forbade him to study the alchemists, Paracelsus and Agrippa. There is, however, a sinister side even to Victor's earlier, more feminine feelings, and not merely because of the parodic inversion of gender. The paradoxical relation between power and perversity is integral to materialistic cultures. It is endemic of creation--that is, we are all created with forbidden desires and the wish to fulfil them by exercise of power, over ourselves, over the external world, and over others. In the same fashion, Frankenstein's Monster is produced by the dominant,

materialistic culture. He is the embodiment of Frankenstein's perverse, anti ethical and anti-social, in short, forbidden yearnings. Instead of a maternal solicitude over the creation of new life, Frankenstein's assiduity requires him to scabble over the collection of dead body parts. Finally, in the context of the Gothic convention of the demonic, Frankenstein's obsession, or "possession" by his project takes on a disturbingly quasi-religious dimension. As noted earlier, Frankenstein is not the first, or the last, Gothic protagonist to dare the hitherto unattempted or heretical. Manfred asserts his autonomy against Providence--but he commits as many sins of *omission* as commission in doing so. Even his challenge to Alfonso is *obstructive*, rather than constructive or actively creative. Ambrosio exiles himself from the ethical code of his church--but does so out of weakness, rather than from any conscious desire to become Satan's accomplice. Melmoth *does* make a conscious bargain with the Devil--but it is unclear as to whether the sterility of that pact has made him cynical, or whether such cynicism (the amorality of the bored, jaded English "milord") drove him into the pact in the first place. Frankenstein, however, willingly surrenders himself to his project. The creation of the Monster is more than a heresy--it is an intellectual "incubus". It is only upon the birth of the demon that Frankenstein's ill-directed energy is extinguished, but this painful separation also causes him great exhaustion: "Idleness had ever been irksome to me, and now I wished to fly from reflection, and hated my former studies"⁷¹. When he finishes his work, he falls into torpor, losing all intellectual energy. On the other hand, the Monster, originally both a product and embodiment of pure intellect, becomes a pathetic, passionate--and Romantic--figure. Victor loses his

possessive side, while the same kind of possessiveness and passion now emerges in the monster.

The clash between Frankenstein and the Monster is actually an attempt to reunite with the other self, but the effort is futile. Finally, this uncontrollable evil energy or consciousness begins to harm not only the individual, but also society. Frankenstein's descent into pseudo-scientific "heresy", and his Monster's sociopathic crimes, are both direct results of their inability to accept, or find acceptance in, the contradictions of a modernising age. The Monster, an artificial product of an arrogant belief in progress, is first "beyond good or evil" but later a force antithetical to civilised values. The irreconcilable conflict between the prevailing "sentimental myth" of the century and previous traditions leads to public and private horror--represented by the Monster's murders, and his tortured psychology.

Paradoxically, the Monster is far more human than his creator--and has healthier urges: he wants a mate for company and solace. Frankenstein's real attitude towards *his* bride remains ambiguous; it is *the Monster* who seeks love. Frankenstein appears to seek *adoration* only.⁷² Thus, through placing the Monster in a sentimental setting, Mary Shelley defamiliarizes common assumptions and suggests that this new tradition does not deal with reality in its entirety. Nor is there room in it for the *misbegotten*: the Monster, like the science which gave him life, is *marginalised* and shunned, by society and by his creator alike. Frankenstein himself underestimates his own creation's ingenuity and malignity--and dies for his mistake. All his good intentions, and attempts to make good his mistake, come to nothing. *His* "sleep of reason" has indeed created monsters. The novel sounds a

warning note (whether premature or prescient) of the damage that human weakness of character can do to utopian dreams of progress.⁷³ Frankenstein's acquisition of forbidden knowledge is emblematic of the age's arrogant abnegation of responsibility.

Abnegations of responsibility, stubborn intransigence, and arrogance are all the hallmarks of a culture heading for a breakdown in civilised behavior. They are also indices of psychological dysfunction, of "false consciousness" (in an existential sense, "bad faith") or hypocritical wilful misunderstanding of the duties that the exercise of free will involves. Power and social status are the *Sine Qua Non* of gratification in bourgeois society--and yet, in accordance with Freud's pleasure principle, a gratification which brings with it new, unresolved desire. Victor, hopeful of the rewards of reputation, or adoration, does not leave society as Walton does. Instead, he stays within it to find a remedy for death--but, when he decides to create life, his motives are not entirely scientific or disinterested. He thinks of the outcome of his labours in terms of his possible rise in status (in the eyes of his creation at least): "A new species will bless me as his creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me"⁷⁴ This is more than a sublimation of parental urges; it is the hubris of a freethinker for whom aspiration towards demiurgy is neither egotistical nor heretical. Certainly, his blasphemous (according to Christian tenets) experiments on dead bodies, and his attempt to acquire knowledge of creation seem to indicate a belief that he can ignore religious and moral proscriptions with impunity. To a twentieth century reader (or film-maker) he may appear a crypto-atheist, as well as a proto-materialist. However, he remains a *soi-disant* "sentimentalist"; he does not see himself as the enemy of bourgeois

respectability, or of religion. Victor obviously feels no spiritual obligation or spark of the divine within him, despite his desire to see himself (and to be seen) as a good sentimental "family man", because he is a perfect materialist, and insensible of his blasphemy. Despite his insistence (to Walton) that he tried to be faithful to the sentimental ideals of family life and marriage, contradictions in his own narrative indicate his violation of those very ideals. The only question of interpretation that remains is whether such a violation is unconscious on his part, whether he is to be understood as not merely inconsistent, but hypocritical?

Mary Shelley frequently emphasizes that there is indeed something discordant about "life" itself. Her starting point, as for her early Gothic forerunners, is the demarcation between appearance and reality in a civilised world. She, too, shows that it is on account of materialistic and empiricist undercurrents in her positivist culture that individual perversity grows. Her narrative not only deals with contingent social realities of her time, but looks beyond them, emphasising the psychopathy and helplessness of man in a rational, sentimental world. She deplores the way in which individuals' "personalities" are moulded by industrial and progressive society. Constituting a unified-self in such a "civilised" milieu seems impossible. It is through the defamiliarized picture of the industrial, scientific world of her time that she illustrates the catastrophic consequences of "progress", itself a *malignant* form of synthesis.

Mary Shelley haunts her reader in true Gothic style, with tension and opposition. Even *Frankenstein's* language is oxymoronic: "I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into

the sea by the winds"⁷⁵ is the exultant cry of Frankenstein's creature. After causing his creator's destruction, incompleteness robs the Monster of his will to survive and pursue happiness in this world. The final image of reversed Prometheanism is a lament for lost innocence. Through his product (and despite himself, his agent) the Monster, Frankenstein violates the "sacred" ethics of the eighteenth century--but those ethics themselves, as Mary Shelley shows, have already created psychological disorder and perversity. The Monster's "victory", however, also brings about his end: despite his alchemical and necromantic origins, he is a child of the eighteenth century drive towards positivism and utility, and he cannot survive without the comforts of civilisation or without acknowledgement from his creator. The irony is that he has been created specifically and exclusively *for* a paradigm which cannot support (or bear) him, but rather, drives him to psychosis. Both paterfamilias and "orphan" err; there can be no rapprochement in the emotional paternal-filial side of their struggle. Likewise, the tension and mutual exclusiveness obtaining between two world views, one archaic, outmoded and corrupt, the other ingenuous, arrogant and already decadent, leaves civilisation itself with little chance of survival. However, if we readers force ourselves to find an optimistic message, we can remark that Robert Walton still survives: as an uncorrupted (and chastised, humbled) being, he can make a fresh beginning, taking a lesson from the stories of both Frankenstein and the Monster. In the end, then, synthesis (or harmony) appears to be a dream quickly soured; only *dialectic* (with all the willingness to acknowledge error that it implies) offers

any hope of navigation (in Walton's case, literally) through a world in disarray. Tortuous the progress may be, and modest the result, but further discord may at least be avoided.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV.

¹ The Gothic as a genre had, by Mary Shelley's time, moved away from faux-medieval "jeux d'esprit", and was addressing particular political and social issues of its day. Many English radicals and dissidents found the Gothic mode appropriate for their ethical and political concerns. Hence, the Gothic mode is quite appropriate to covertly denounce the erosion of ethical and political standards

² Bhalla 10.

³ Those same Whig Historians are now, in a less positivistic (and less positive) age, deprecated for an excessively sanguine view not only of the final fruits of progress, but of its *root*: "It is now an ordinary point of derision that Macaulay and Stubbs could see the Middle Ages as a predestined triumph of parliamentary democracy . . ." Daniel 3.

⁴ "Coleridge and Wordsworth, for instance, rejected the dominant eighteenth century conception of the world as a great Machine working according to knowable and mechanical laws of causation. And Blake condemned all models of social and moral action derived from reason". (Bhalla 6.) For them, industrial rationalism increased the selfish economic pursuits of individuals and destroyed the humanist tradition of cooperation and codependence, replacing these with egoism and competitive individualism.

⁵ Bhalla 121.

⁶ As he cannot bear the conflict in his psyche between conscious and unconscious, Frankenstein separates his conscious side from himself. The developments of consciousness lead to formation of the *self*. This process is pleasurable as well as painful: it is pleasurable to exercise our peculiarly human power of becoming a self, asserting this power and thus claiming an existence, and it is painful to surrender potentials and desires that are not consistent with the maintenance of that self. In *Frankenstein* the process of generating a self necessitates severance from the

unconscious, creating a schizoprenia, reminiscent of Freud's concept of "civil war" in the psyche. (Bloom, *Agon* 99.)

⁷ In 1660, the lugubrious Jansenist Blaise Pascal explained man's ambiguous grandeur as a sentient but weak creature, a "thinking reed": "La grandeur de l'homme est grande en ce qu'il se connaît misérable . . . L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature; mais c'est un roseau pensant . . . Toute notre dignité consiste donc en la pensée". Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (Gallimard: Pleiade, 1976) 1156-1175. If all man's claim to be Shakespeare's paragon of animals (rather than his "quintessence of dust") resides in his ability to reflect on the universe around him, that does not mean that his attention is reciprocated. Fragment 207 of the Brunschschweig edition of *The Pensees* contains the following acknowledgement of man's lowly *marginal* position: "Combien de royaumes nous ignorent". Man's own ignorance matters less to Pascal than the fact that all his strivings may go unnoticed. Neither Pascal's God, nor posterity, need necessarily recognise the struggles for autonomy which provide a reason for living. Gothic plays up this theme of consciousness in (and of) isolation. The Monster is the genre's finest example of such misery.

⁸ Thornburg claims "Without Walton's description of Frankenstein we would have no objective idea of this central character's probable state of mind; without Walton's reporting of the final appearance of the Monster we would have no real reason to believe in that character's objective existence". (Thornburg 66.) Indeed, Thornburg later makes the playful hypothesis that the Monster may be considered, not as a being with real independent existence, but as the murderous alter-ego of a schizophrenic Frankenstein. However ludic (or ludicrous) this interpretation may be, it *would* be quite tenable--were it not for Walton's testimony.

⁹ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (London: Everyman's Library, 1965) 3.

¹⁰ Mary Shelley 4.

¹¹ Thornburg emphasises the *psychological* dimension of the setting, with its "blazing whiteness . . . The white light of the region where all colors are present and none is

discernible". (Thornburg 72-73) She claims that this "whiteness", which includes all colors in itself, is Shelley's vision of the Ideal, or "intense inane". Thornburg 73.

¹² Curiously, American exponents (or parodists) of the genre, like Poe or Lovecraft, were drawn to this motif rather more than their British counterparts. The last chapters of Poe's *The Voyage of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* also emphasise man's isolation in a world which appears indifferent to his existence, and utilise eldritch imagery of a Pole which hides bizarre flora, fauna and even a peculiar form of water. H.P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* is even more baroque.

¹³ Mary Shelley 13-14.

¹⁴ Mary Shelley 18.

¹⁵ Mary Shelley 17.

¹⁶ Mary Shelley 17.

¹⁷ Mary Shelley's emphasis on the loss of the mother suggests the loss not only of biological origin, but of the "feminine" norms of a civilised world which keep potential "masculine" human energy under control. Since Walton lost his mother at an early age and before his culturally shaped identity emerged, the expression of this energy is infantile. Though he searches for a "new world", he is still devoted to the strictures of the sentimental culture which, in not fully encountering, he has not outgrown.

¹⁸ Mary Shelley 10.

¹⁹ Punter 114.

²⁰ Manfred is forced to acknowledge his guilt, but is then permitted to retire to a monastery. Agnes is punished for her transgression, but is rescued. Even Ambrosio has it within his power to save both his person and his soul *until* he signs a contract with the Devil. For Frankenstein, however, *alea iacta est*. He has no chance of redemption. He

becomes both renegade and fugitive--the closest parallel with any other Gothic protagonist would be with Melmoth, hopeless and powerless.

²¹ Mary Shelley 226.

²² Mary Shelley's prototypes for her characters were Byron and Shelley: indeed, she wrote *Frankenstein* at the urging of those two poets. The romantic aspiration towards the imaginary boundless ocean of immortality, however, emerges differently in *Frankenstein*. It interprets the motivating power of Romanticism as an appreciation of--or obsession with--death. Mary Shelley's novel analyzes the obstinate mentality of Romantics like Byron and Shelley, adventurous yet dangerously blind to their actual psychological problems. The characters of the early Frankenstein and Walton, in fact, represent these two poets respectively: they lack self consciousness, escape from the physical reality of life, break the ties of society and live in an imaginary, almost solipsistic world. Mary Shelley returned to this analysis, in greater detail in her *valette* to the Romantic ideal *The Last Man* where thinly disguised portraits of Byron and Shelley allow her to depict the weakness of such noble characters, full of "heroic energy" but ultimately defeated by their own inability to truly engage with the external world. The eponymous protagonist of *The Last Man* is indeed forced to confront a world in which he is humanity's last survivor.

²³ Abrams 542.

²⁴ However, to oppose her new anti-sentimental myth to the sentimental tradition, and to stimulate the imagination, Mary Shelley does utilise some fairy tale elements in her novel. The motif of the sleeping Monster, for instance, suggests the fairy tales of the East in which the evil genie, imprisoned in a small box or an earthenware jar by either a king or a prophet is released from his prison, causing great mischief for mankind. Like the imprisoned genii, the Monster is harmless, a "Sleeping Beauty", as Frankenstein first perceived him, till stirred by a heedless hand. The metaphor of the "sleeping monster", in fact, stands for the "threat" to the sentimental culture.

²⁵ In earlier gothic fiction, the settings--medieval ruins, abbeys and castles--are not dead or lifeless. They are themselves animated, serving as loci for phenomena which have a

very tangible effect upon the human protagonists. These phenomena may be interpreted as indices of supernatural powers, or, more metaphorically, as the "renascent" spirit not of the Classical, but of the medieval world. In *Otranto* we have the gigantic "helmet" which crushes Manfred's son, Conrad; in *The Monk* we have the "Bleeding Nun" in the Lindenberg castle, and "Satan" occupying the Capuchin Church; in *Udolpho* we have a "ghost" which is said to have haunted the chamber of the late marchioness Villeroi. These may either be taken straightforwardly as signs of particular Providence, or explained away rationally (as in *Udolpho*), but the *frisson* of the numinous, or the uncanny, remains. All these give character and purpose to the setting. Mary Shelley, by making the Monster a *part*, as well as a *product*, of the setting, similarly animates or personifies it. The lifeless parts of bodies from necropolises are re-animated, reinvested with life. So the ghostly apparitions of previous Gothic novels, and the uncanny resonances of the settings, here find symbolic expression in the person of the Monster. And just as the Monster is made up of the parts of dead bodies, so too does Frankenstein's "science" incorporate the seemingly dead, deviant knowledge of previous traditions.

²⁶Burns 647.

²⁷ "Alchemists assumed an intricate system of affinities between chemicals and other forms of being . . . alchemy rested upon philosophical principles most clearly and authoritatively stated by Aristotle and developed by scholastic philosophers". Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1989) 135.

²⁸ "The insistence on secrecy highlights a dimension of the occult arts that might otherwise be less clear: their value simply as a form of knowledge . . . knowledge might *bring* power, but it also *was* power . . . The point is not so much to gain control over the world, though magic might also accomplish that. More basically, it is cherished simply because it brings hidden things to light, or at least to the dim visibility of the shadows" Kieckhefer 142.

²⁹ Kieckhefer's caveat regarding hasty condemnation of medieval alchemy might also be worth remembering in this context, however: "One qualification must be made at once. The people who studied astrology and alchemy in the twelfth and following centuries would not usually have thought of themselves as magicians. Their *enemies* might so

brand them . . . It was only in later centuries, especially at the end of the Middle Ages, that practitioners began to see themselves as engaged in natural magic". Kieckhefer, p.116.

³⁰Mary Shelley 30.

³¹ Frankenstein's dysfunctional psychology actually embodies *three* of the neuroses now familiar to the twentieth century reader through Freud's analyses: rebellion against the father himself; rebellion against all respectable "father figures" of rationalist, sentimental culture--the "super ego" of Mary Shelley's society; and a form of *scoptophilia* expressed through Victor's desire to know the occult--or forbidden--origins and workings of life (procreation, in its most biological sense).

³² A reasonable (and properly sceptical) account of these two alchemists has been written by Charles Mackay. Agrippa "was born in Cologne in 1486, and began at an early age the study of chemistry and philosophy. By some means or other, which have never been very clearly explained, he managed to impress his contemporaries with a great idea of his wonderful attainments. Honours poured upon him in thick succession; and he was highly esteemed by all the learned men of his time. Melancthon speaks of him with respect and condemnation. Erasmus also bears testimony in his favour; and the general voice of his age proclaimed him a light of literature and ornament to philosophy. Some men, by dint of excessive egotism, manage to persuade their contemporaries that they are very great men indeed ; . . . Such seems to have been the case with Agrippa". (Charles Mackay, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* [Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1995].154) As for Paracelsus in the sixteenth century, "this strange charlatan" is no more dignified or suitable a model for emulation. Mackay summarizes his "frantic imaginings, which he called a doctrine" as a compound of spiritual exegesis, astrology, and frank demonology, as well as a bizarre variant of alchemy in which the belly is the grand laboratory, and gold could cure ossification of the heart. Mackay 159-162.

³³ Mary Shelley 27.

³⁴ Mary Shelley 28.

³⁵ Eco makes this Elizabethan court magus an explicitly neo-medieval figure: "Immediately after the official ending of the Middle Ages, Europe was ravaged by a pervasive medieval nostalgia . . . At the flowering of the English Renaissance John Dee or Robert Fludd rediscovered symbols and emblems of medieval Jewish mysticism". Eco 66.

³⁶ See Maturin 379.

³⁷ Maturin 408.

³⁸ Mary Shelley acknowledges that hidden "heretical" tradition as ubiquitous even in the rationalistic, scientific age in which she sets her novel. In *Frankenstein's* research, she integrates alchemical techniques with positivist science, suggesting that there has been *no* "paradigmatic shift" or "Copernican revolution". Carl Becker points out that "we are accustomed to think of the eighteenth century as essentially modern in its temper"(Becker 29) but he argues the reverse, claiming ". . . we find that at every turn the *Philosophes* betray their debt to medieval thought without being aware of it. They denounce Christian philosophy, but rather too much after the manner of those who are but half emancipated from the "superstitions" they scorn. They had put off the fear of God, but maintained a respectful attitude towards the Deity. They ridiculed the idea that the universe had been created in six days, but still believed it to be a beautifully articulated machine designed by the supreme being according to a rational plan . . . They renounced the authority of Church and Bible, but exhibited a naive faith in the authority of nature and reason . . . They denied that miracles ever happened, but believed in the perfectibility of the human race". (Becker 30-31) Becker's critique and comparison of the medieval and the "modern" show that it is only the terms which changed in the eighteenth century. Human nature, however, remained the same. *Frankenstein's* ambition, too, suggests that the aspirations which act as stimuli on the daring and unconventional have not changed since the days of Roger Bacon, the "alchemical underground" and the legend of Faust.

³⁹ Mary Shelley 32.

⁴⁰ Burns 636.

⁴¹ Burns 636.

⁴² An early protest against industrial cruelty came from Burke: "neither God nor man will long endure it" (Bhalla 9). This remark *may* have been the timorous and complacent reaction of a noted conservative and reactionary, whose account of the French Revolution pushed the British government into instituting those repressive measures which culminated in the Peterloo Massacre, an act of violence *against* those whom the Industrial Revolution had already dispossessed. However, in this context it may not be too charitable to ascribe Burke's comment to the same sense of outrage that provoked Blake's "Songs of Experience". Soon, however, Burke's God was conveniently excised from the modern world picture, replaced by faith in the new, profane social structure inflicting more industrial and institutional brutality.

⁴³ This is actually one of the most pertinent sociological points in the novel: a society which prided itself on the expression of familial affection but preferred to deal with death euphemistically could not fully appreciate life, and thus undermined its own security. Frankenstein's dream in which he sees his mother's body covered with worms conveys his subconscious fear of biological death: ". . . I held the corpse of my dear mother in my arms, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel." Mary Shelley 52.

⁴⁴ Mary Shelley 48.

⁴⁵ This, of course, inspires the feeling of the uncanny which Freud addresses, and for the same reasons. A primitive belief, in the survival (however attenuated) of the dead in physical form, appears to receive confirmation. All the progress made in *surmounting* such terrors appears to be overturned, and the reader, like the characters in Gothic novels, is left with the disturbing conclusion that physical dissolution marks, not the end of life, but only a descent into brutish, ghoulisn viciousness.

⁴⁶ Mary Shelley 51.

⁴⁷ Thornburg discusses the concept of the "other" with respect to the cultural and psychological assumptions of the nineteenth century. She claims that the paradigm of the

"sentimental myth" served to separate Mary Shelley's age from the various mythic traditions (or realities) that preceded it. For Thornburg, "the Gothic is the distorted mirror image of the sentimental, reflecting, threatening, and to an extent mocking the conventions of sentimentality". Thornburg 2.

⁴⁸ This is a Romantic concept, deriving from the theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau was convinced of the innate goodness of mankind, and believed that all evil stemmed from the corrupting influence of "civilisation". At first the Monster, like Maturin's Immalee, appears to be a dramatic illustration of this theory--but the Monster's *unnatural* origins make his status more problematic.

⁴⁹ This motif, like the polar one before it, recalls Burke's conception of mind as being originally indifferent. Burke claims that "The human mind is often, and I think it is for the most part, in a state of neither pain nor pleasure, which I call a state of indifference". (Burke 30.) Burke deems pain or pleasure necessary to awaken the soul from its "indifferent" slumber.

⁵⁰ Mary Shelley 117.

⁵¹ Mary Shelley 136.

⁵² "By the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century the phantasmagoria had become a part of the life lived by a large number of people in city slums, factories, farms, charity hospitals, poor schools, convict ships, workhouses, lunatic asylums, orphanages and other sites where inequality was made manifest and where pain was inflicted to extract consent for the existing social order". (Bhalla 8.) Bhalla's remarks serve as a reminder of the twentieth century assessment of the Industrial Revolution. The antithesis of positivist "Whig history", this interpretation suggests that the Industrial Revolution was ultimately a *destructive* movement, which first demolished, and then re-defined the ethical codes of society, legitimizing social injustice and the exercise of brutal power.

⁵³ Mary Shelley 112.

⁵⁴ Mary Shelley 113, 114.

⁵⁵ Mary Shelley 114.

⁵⁶ Harold Bloom, introduction, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 8-9.

⁵⁷ Praz 61.

⁵⁸ Praz argues a Miltonic influence on Romanticism claiming that "With Milton, the Evil One definitely assumes an aspect of fallen beauty, of splendour shadowed by sadness and death; he is majestic though in ruin". (Praz 56.) He also hints at Milton's sympathy for this doomed rebellion by asking if "*Paradise Lost* . . . is a work of imagination of Milton's thwarted purposes, at a time when all hopes he placed in the Commonwealth were dashed to the ground . . . [and] Satan's cry of revolt [is] the cry of the poet himself" (Praz 56.) However, it is possibly *not* the romantically doomed and foreordained conclusion that provokes sympathy for the fallen Lucifer, but, as Praz suggests, the "heroic energy" which finds full expression only in revolt: "He [Satan] proclaims also the glory of having attempted the great enterprise, in spite of his defeat (lines 623-4)". Praz 55.

⁵⁹ Mary Shelley 135.

⁶⁰ J. C. Oates points out the theological inversion underpinning the Monster's language: "Evil thenceforth became my good", he says, in direct reference to Satan, "Evil be thou my good". Joyce Carol Oates, "Frankenstein's Fallen Angel," *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, ed. Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 71.

⁶¹ Mary Shelley 101.

⁶² Mary Shelley 152.

⁶³ Mary Shelley 176.

⁶⁴ Mary Shelley 176.

⁶⁵ Mary Shelley 176.

⁶⁶ Mary Shelley 176. This, incidentally, reveals his typically rationalist concern for the exoneration of posterity; like the thinkers of late eighteenth century France, he would prefer to lose the chance to obtain the gratitude of one being--in this case, the Monster--for a present act of charity, in the hope of saving his future reputation. See Becker, *passim*, for illustration of this Enlightenment teleology.

⁶⁷ As Thornburg claims "The good man of sentimental myth . . . becomes in his own way a victim in his Gothic manifestation", (Thornburg 41.) and she goes on to argue that "the sentimental insistence upon middle class virtue and virtuousness of the middle class is likewise exposed in the Gothic as a self deceptive and finally a powerless stance". Thornburg 43.

⁶⁸ The motif of perverse sexuality appears in other examples of Gothic as "incest", a sexual relation forbidden by society. Gothic writers frequently allude to this in their covert revolt against the set identities imposed on individuals. Mary Shelley implies a quasi-incestuous relationship on the part of Victor and Elizabeth, brought up as brother and sister.

⁶⁹ Mary Shelley 26.

⁷⁰ Although he attributes such possessiveness to his "childish seriousness", it seems that his early class consciousness also plays a part in this. He says "When I mingled with other families, I distinctly discerned how peculiarly fortunate my lot was": (Mary Shelley 78.) a position he determines to maintain. His altruism (as he perceives it) is wide-ranging, but ultimately rooted in bourgeois confidence (just as, in *The Monk*, Raymond is urged to make use of his tour through Spain by listening to the grievances of the people, in order that he may rule them more justly and maintain his position). Pragmatism underlies all his actions, "enlightened self-interest" though it may be.

⁷¹ Mary Shelley 65.

⁷² The self-centered hero centers all his attention on his Monster. He forgets all other ties of human affection, forgets his family, and passes into a state of obsessive absorption in the Monster. However, such absorption never turns to love--as the Monster comes to know.

⁷³ Milton felt a similar disillusionment at the Restoration; the Monster is not the only motif inspired by *Paradise Lost*

⁷⁴ Mary Shelley 47.

⁷⁵ Mary Shelley 242.

CONCLUSION

Gothic: Pejorative or Purgative?

In a literary context Gothic signifies excess both in theme and style. The tortuous, fragmented narratives and amoral, irrational phenomena which form an uncanny interpretation of life, in fact constitute a critique of the Augustan period's "rationality" and "morality". Combined with the ecstasies of romantic idealism, the malcontent assertion of individualism, and the "sublime" evocations of a mythic past, the genre presents the dilemmas and cultural anxieties of an age. All the anterior literary traditions--tragedy, romance, legend, fairy tale, and myths--whose stock motifs are frequently used in Gothic, serve to furnish the genre's unique abode. The "anachronistic" picture in Gothic defamiliarises the present. The novelists of this genre retreat into a mythic (although hardly utopian) past, taking their subject matter from the unresolved conflicts of the previous, medieval, paradigm, which, indeed, remain pertinent to the uncertainties and internal tensions within the Augustan age and its positivist industrial nineteenth century successor. Feudalism and Catholicism, the two interacting institutions of the Middle Ages are contrasted with the "rationalist" (or sentimental) worldview of the eighteenth century. The pseudo-antiquarian tone of Gothic creates a *Doppelganger* image of the age to define the period through its early counterpart, and hence, reveal the dysfunction still present in society, its institutions and individuals.

The period which witnessed the birth of Gothic was that in which the early forces of industrialisation were producing vast changes in the ways people

lived and perceived the world. The stability of a long-accepted social structure and its prescribed (and proscribed) individual roles were dissolving amid the new social patterns. The breakdown of the accepted class structure that produced an uneasiness among the beleaguered aristocracy, was reflected in a literature which was obsessed with the culture of Augustan Rome. The appeal of Augustan writing lay in the comfort which it offered in its portrayal (or advocacy) of a rigid social hierarchy: a concept immediately appealing to a highly class conscious society. In this respect, the Gothic genre was a reaction to the rigid (and rational) organisation of both individual and society. Therein lay its own corresponding appeal: its note of dissent. The genre emerged in protest against a complacent and brutalising civilisation founded rather smugly on the tenets of the Enlightenment. Thus, the Gothic universe cannot be located in some supernatural space beyond the profane world, or away from the strictures of the age which produced it. It is grounded in the conditions of a period initiated by a "rationalist" philosophy which had dominated European culture since the seventeenth century.

All the Gothic novelists find fault with their "respectable" Augustan environment and its political, familial, religious, and economic structures. To better illustrate the dysfunction in the existing "rationally planned" institutions they willingly abjure total historical veracity, "backdating" eighteenth century individuals and their sentimentality to an earlier epoch. The apparently anachronistic Gothic settings are no more than metaphors for current society. In this conflation of ancient and modern the "sacrosanct" values and "humanist" dreams of the age are deliberately turned upside down. Naturally satirised and

even ridiculed, they are also more *directly* indicted. There is no place for euphemism in Gothic: individuals are either malicious, or credulous, and human nature is always susceptible to corruption. As a counter movement to Augustan decorum, Gothic voiced the irrational side of both man and society: it showed up man's endeavour to correct both himself and his society on the principles of reason. The gothicists dealt with the mystery of human existence (or human nature): they analysed man's relationship with his artificial, "civilised", environment, and with himself, the norms of which were defined by Augustan demagogues. The actual social decorum of the age is absent in these works--if there *are* references to it, they tend to be only to its degeneration into ambition, hypocrisy, and credulity.

Walpole, in *Otranto*, was the first to leave the rationalist (or decorous) path of Neoclassicism. In his novel he depicted individuals torn between old morals and new drives. His characters--villainous Manfred, hypocritical Frederick, credulous Theodore, and the helpless maidens, Isabella, and Matilda--were to become new archetypes: templates for the characters in later Gothic works. Manfred was the model for typical Gothic villains like Montoni, Ambrosio, Melmoth, and Frankenstein; Theodore's virtues and weaknesses inform the characters of Emily, Raymond, Moncada, and Robert Walton; while Matilda and Isabella are almost endlessly reincarnated: in St. Aubert, Valancourt, Antonia, Agnes, Immalee, William, Elizabeth, Henry Clerval. None of these figures (least of all those in Mary Shelley's self-consciously modern--or even "futuristic"--story) could possibly be taken as historically accurate medieval archetypes. Nor are they timeless (despite the recurrent

universal theme of temptation and transgression). The gothicists were of their time in a way that the more successful Romantics were not, and correspondingly, their fictional characters stood as representatives exclusively of an industrial (or Augustan) society and its values. Thus, a Gothic metaphor of anachronism leads to moral allegory. The double clash--between villainous and virtuous characters and between external forces and human beings--represents the ethical confusions of the Augustan period. The villainous and virtuous characters alike display the practical moral judgements of their society; its ambition and decorum. Though rational, both the villainous and virtuous characters are naive. Even the victims do not show the slightest personality of their own, remaining as emblems of social decorum. The good characters are unable to understand the plots of the villains; the villains, on the other hand, cannot foresee the catastrophe they themselves will eventually encounter. After all, these characters form a society in which, while the strong exploit the weak, the strong themselves also suffer: the credulous characters are confronted by the villains, and the villains by inexplicable, irrational external forces.

Those external forces are agents of Providence, and as such, are far better incorporated within a superstitious medieval Catholic framework than in a portrayal of the authors' own age. Even Mary Shelley has to include the *medieval* motif of alchemy to convey the deviance of Frankenstein's researches and the threat of his Monster. However, there is, in addition to the motifs of the uncanny and the barbaric, a *moral* dimension to the Gothic's obsession with the Middle Ages. It appears that, Radcliffe aside, the gothicists preferred to make their *ethical* suggestions through the mouthpiece of these supernatural powers:

the ghostly embodiment of Alfonso is the first prototype of the later moral guardians. The Bleeding Nun and Satan, who appear in tangible and genuinely pernicious forms, in fact, also represent archaic pseudo-ethical imperatives: both make demands upon the living characters. The figure of Melmoth, representing both the Wandering Jew and--via Faust-- Satan, both castigates and attempts to effect further falls from grace. Frankenstein follows an older tradition of pseudo-scientific ambition, leading first to creation of a monster, (an embodiment of that knowledge) and then to catastrophe. All these apotheoses have medieval Catholic or even Tragic resonances, as does the recurrent theme of individuals suffering for the sins of their ancestors. Even a "Deus ex machina" often proves to be as daemonic as it is divine, and is no guarantee of salvation. These celestial (or infernal) correlatives provide no remedy for the general sublunary degeneration. The wicked are chastised but the innocent frequently perish. Such helplessness before the implacable (and unwillingly unacknowledged) decrees of Providence is a metaphor for a general deficiency in the Augustan age: paralysed helplessness before the knowledge that recent scientific, positivist advances made no acknowledgement of (and therefore no provision for) the caprices of human psychology. Furthermore, "civilisation" itself is shown as oppressive and destructive: authoritarian institutions, as in *The Monk* and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, only cause further perversity. Therefore, though gothicists used the dramatic device of divine intervention to indict their age's moral and spiritual degeneracies, there is also disapproval of such cruel moralising. Even Radcliffe completely removes these moral guardians from her novel, limiting their existence within "imagined"

terrors which, she claims, arise from the weakness of human psychology and its darkness.

Gothicists are rarely instructive in the sense that Augustan writers are: they simply present the moral dilemmas of their age resulting from rapid social and individual changes. They also lampoon man's existence as tragi-comic, suggesting that all human struggle is vain and pointless. Individuals are passionate, brutal, credulous, timorous, and *hypocritical*: characteristics endemic in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, Gothic certainly effects in the reader, if not a desire to return to past ethical codes, then at least a certain heterodoxy concerning Augustan morals. It suggests that above those practical social values of the age and their anachronistic counterpart, there *are* some "universal morals". If Gothic has any didactic impulse behind it, it is essentially *purgative*: perhaps in the cathartic sense (through the emotions which the novels inspire in the reader) but certainly in a more satirical sense, castigating the more unwholesome aspects of the Augustan age as both unnecessary (that is to say, *not* divinely ordained) and capable of amelioration.

All the novels analysed in this dissertation suggest a common deficiency of objective judgement among their protagonists. Be they villainous or virtuous, there is, in fact, no depth to the characters in Gothic. Since they recognize no moral code outside their milieu--the heroes are bound to the social norms of their respectable societies, and the malefactors are blinded by the notion of advancement or progress--they find themselves lost (or abandoned) amid confusion and chaos. The characters prepare their own catastrophes, because they cannot step outside the life society has designed for

them. It is this moral lacuna that leads Gothic protagonists to wander into physical or spiritual danger: Manfred is ignorant of his eventual punishment; Emily remains dull and rational; Raymond suffers as a result of his disbelief in ghosts; Melmoth and Ambrosio for their blasphemy; Frankenstein for his positivistic hubris; the Monster for his need of acceptance and guidance.

Although, in origin, a middle-class art form, Gothic condemns the values of the bourgeoisie and the sterility of their aspirations. Why, then, was the genre received so enthusiastically by those classes whose most dearly held virtues it attacked? The answer is instructive. In fact, Gothic defines itself through a confrontation with the bourgeois culture, and in doing so, it not only lampoons their materialistic values, but also offers that class a mode of imaginary transcendence, which they would never be able to achieve in their concrete, rational milieu. This, easily missed, is the only dialectic role of Gothic in the Augustan age, as it is for most art forms in any age. This, escapism at its most "improving" is what Burke meant by the "sublime", but the dominant note of Gothic literature is less comforting than Burke himself suggested literature should be. Through opposition to a class and its worldview, Gothic defines the sentimental world; it becomes a mirror through which middle class people are forced to see themselves as caricatures.

Consequently, it can be said that gothicists are not mere escapists who crafted extravagantly ornamented fabrications. Their works are not smugly whiggish accounts of anterior conflicts and corruptions now happily surmounted, the authors do not proclaim synthesis universally and happily achieved. Nor are they sentimentalists longing to return to some mythic (or

utopian) state beyond the temporal world. They are, on the contrary, fully aware of the sterility of such desires. It is, in fact, the sense of the loss of "universal moral" and spiritual values in a materialistic world which propels Gothic literature. Therefore, Gothic, in all its various aspects, reflects the social, political, moral and religious conditions of a specific period in English history. It is neither nostalgia nor opiate, but is, rather, despite its subjectivity, a mode of ethical discourse about man and his place in the universe, and a warning against dogma of any kind.

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